

YMCA Youth & Government

How did the YMCA Youth & Government program impact your life?

The Youth & Government program is the single best practical teaching tool in NH civics today. I wish every high school student could participate. For democracy to work and survive, we all have to participate- not just the lawyers!

I believe that if you practice good politics- how you run campaigns, frame and discuss issues, it will lead to good policy.



What years did you attend Y&G: I believe it was 1969 or 1970

What High School did you attend: Kennett High School

Did you hold an office?

I was the chaplain of the senate- consolation prize for not being elected to some other higher office

How did you learn about youth and government:

I learned about Youth and Government from one of the real mentors of my life- Zaven Vorperian, who was the carroll County YMCA director and the director of Camp Huckins. Zaven loved kids and loved teenagers. He was a mentor to me throughout his life.

Favorite memory from the program?

My favorite memory was watching the NH Youth Senate debate bills, some crazy, some impractical, but many that made as much sense or more than the real bills that were submitted and I saw once I was elected to the real legislature. I was impressed by how seriously the students took the process.

Another favorite memory was the Friday night dance at the Concord Y and staying with a family in Concord- as teenagers, why wouldn't that be the best. Also, meeting Governor Peterson who later became a friend of mine.

Why do you think the Y&G program is still relevant today? The best lesson that I witnessed in Youth and Government which I have carried with me throughout all of my career, both in politics and in life, is that your word is your bond. If you committed to vote for a bill and then changed your mind and didn't let the sponsors know, you were considered an unfair player and someone not doing things the right way- even in Y and G. That is the absolute truth today.

Are there any values you learned still with you or guide you today?

One of my heroes, who is both a friend and a former boss, John McCain, has had to teach that lesson to some of his fellow members of the Senate. You are only as good as your word. If you give your word, it has to be your bond.

The other lesson I witnessed and then still see in the best of our legislators and members of Congress is that compromise is a good result. The person you agree with 70% of the time, as Ronald Reagan said, is your friend and not your enemy. Finally, you can disagree with someone on a policy or political issue without being disagreeable. When I attended Y and G, civility and politeness and finding common ground was the baseline expectation. That was also true in the Legislature, and it used to be true in national politics. We would do well to return to that way.

Stephen Duprey

**2010 Business Leader of the year
Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce**