

Senator Harriss Welcomes More Than 50 Students For Hands-On Legislative Experience At Lewis And Clark Community College

by Lynsey Whitaker - Illinois Senate Republican Staff
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GODFREY – State Senator Erica Harriss (56th-Glen Carbon) welcomed more than 50 students from a dozen area high schools to Lewis and Clark Community College on Thursday for her Fall Youth Advisory Council, an initiative designed to give students a firsthand look at state government while developing leadership skills and sharing ideas with their peers.

“This is one of my very favorite events that we host each year,” said Senator Harriss. “We bring students together from high schools all across the district to hear from some great speakers, learn more about government and meet students from other communities. It's always exciting to hear their ideas and see them get involved.”

Senator Harriss' Youth Advisory Council is a two-part program. During the fall session, students hear from guest speakers and work in small groups to develop legislative proposals. Students vote on their bill ideas and return in the spring to the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield, where they participate in a mock legislative process and debate their proposals.

Throughout the day, students heard from guest speakers who shared their experiences and insights on leadership, public service and professional development.

“I like learning about what's actually happening in our world right now, especially around the U.S. and Illinois,” said Lawdin Warren, a junior at Granite City High School. “Senator Harriss was really nice, and she helped a lot of us learn about what she does. I really appreciate the opportunity.”

“I was taking notes and asking tons of questions because I was genuinely curious about where everybody's mindset was,” said Kiersten Keyhea, a junior at Granite City High School. “I think it's really nice to see people come together and share with the youth what they've experienced and what they've learned.”

“My table has about seven people, and they're all from different schools,” said Corrine Smalley, a junior at Collinsville High School. “We're getting to share our opinions on different issues, and it's nice to hear from everybody and what they have to say.”

“Be consistent. Have integrity. Keep doing things that might seem uncomfortable and challenge yourself,” said Leymar Gray, a senior at Alton High School. “I learned a lot of good life lessons that can genuinely help us, especially as students.”

During the spring session, students will take on different roles in the legislative process, including lawmakers, lobbyists, advocates and members of the media, to debate their proposed legislation in a mock committee hearing at the Capitol.

Harriss said she hopes students leave the experience knowing they can make a difference in their communities.

“Sometimes we hear students say they think they're too young to make a difference, and I hope a day like today shows them otherwise,” said Senator Harriss. “They have great ideas, and their voices deserve to be heard. I'm looking forward to seeing them in Springfield this spring.”