

## Visiting Our State Capital

Kathryn Bosley & Amy Gokey

Franklin County 4-H Members

Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Franklin County

Our trip to the NYS Capital, Albany, was a great opportunity to learn about our state government, and how we as citizens can make a difference. Thanks to the Chateaugay Rotary for providing the funds for us to be able to attend at no cost to us. They are huge supporters of programs that provide opportunities to local youth to expand their education and experiences.

We got to tour the Capital Building and had the chance to sit in the seats of the Assembly members and get a feel for what it would be like to be in session. As a group, we brought up many bills of concern to Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy during our visit to the Assembly chambers. Assemblywoman Fahy also walked us through the many ways and lengthy process it takes to get a bill passed into law. There are over 10,000 bills proposed every year with very few making it all the way to law.

Another thing we did was, sit in on the Senate while it was in session. It was definitely different from the Assembly. They are more old school and vote via hands unlike the Assembly where they have iPads and a little box where they select their answer (yea, nay, abs, vote open).

One of the most interesting and informative presentations was given by Deputy commissioner of the NYS Department of Ag & Markets, David Valesky. It really opened up our eyes to how much this department does in total, and not just checking our animals in at fair. We visited the gorgeous Court of appeals where we learned about the court system in NYS. On Monday night we had a delicious dinner and had a guest speaker Jason Gough a former meteorologist who talked about climate change and some of the projects he has lobbied for in Albany.



On Tuesday we broke into our counties and met our legislative members who represent our individual counties. We were able to meet with our area Assemblyman Billy Jones and express our gratitude for his strong support of agriculture and youth programs. He also listened to our questions and concerns over bills and policies that are important to us, like

the Farm Worker's rights bill. Assemblyman Jones was open to hearing us talk, even with a very busy schedule.

The trip was wrapped up with a very inspiring speech from Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul. Being a former 4-H member, she was very excited to meet with us and express how important it is to be an informed member of society, even at our age. She also shared great advice on how to be involved now in local politics and expressed how important it is to build confidence so that you have the tools to stand in public and voice your informed opinion.

Overall, it was a fun few days of meeting other 4-H youth from all over the state and from different backgrounds. We would highly recommend this trip to any 4-H teen who wants to learn more about public service and government.