

To the Editor:

Looking back, Girls State was one of the most influential things I have ever taken part of. It is something that shaped my life, gave me new respect for my country and the military, and opened my eyes to what our state government is really like.

Girls State is a week-long event for junior girls in high school, a program of the American Legion Auxiliary. The purpose of the week is to stress responsible citizenship (such as always voting), the founding principles of our nation, and ethics. We participate in mock-government activities such as voting for positions in towns, counties, and state. The week concludes with the election of the Governor of Massachusetts. There is also a Boys State which occurs the same week; both take place on the Stonehill College campus in Easton, MA.

Last year was only the second year in a row that girls from Gateway went to Girls State. Ursula Barth went in 2015 and Anna Pless and I went in 2016. We were sponsored by the Gateway Education Foundation and the First Congregational Church of Huntington (Norwich Hill) last year.

I was so incredibly grateful to the First Congregational Church and the Gateway Education Foundation for giving me the opportunity to become fully immersed in the inner-workings of my state government. We were given the opportunity to take mini classes in law, government, or economics. My government class was taught by Larry DiCara, a well-known Boston attorney and politician. The Harvard graduate was funny, informative, and interesting. I was also elected

The friends I made there are girls that I still talk to everyday. The phenomenal program connected me with a multitude of girls my age who were motivated, determined, intelligent, and interested in government.

For years the American Legion Auxiliary has sent two boys to Boys State. The Gateway Education Foundation would like to continue sending two girls. Russell First has already made a donation to assist in funding the girls, but the Foundation needs more funding to cover the second girl.

Anyone willing to donate to support Gateway's participation in Girls State this year can send a check (payable to the Gateway Education Foundation) to GEF, 12 Littleville Rd., Huntington, MA. Online donations may also be made from the Foundation's website: [www.GatewayEducationFoundation.org](http://www.GatewayEducationFoundation.org), using paypal or a credit card.

Sincerely,

Rachel LeBarron  
Gateway Senior