



NYPIRG is proud to announce that the inaugural semester of the Donald K. Ross Future Leaders Program has been a roaring success — for the organization, the Class of 2024 interns, and the people of New York State!

One of the original “Nader’s Raiders,” Donald was the “father” of the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) and NYPIRG’s first executive director. It was Donald’s genius to see that a better world could be created by harnessing the energy, idealism, and smarts of college students — and that the experience of civic engagement would make these younger adults better citizens. *Action for a Change*, a book co-written by Donald and Ralph Nader, offered a blueprint for college student activism, and this guide soon led to the establishment of dozens of PIRGs in states across the country.

Training future leaders to become effective advocates and agents of change in the public interest was central to the mission of Donald’s life’s work. The Donald K. Ross Future Leaders Program honors this legacy of work by creating a pipeline of well-trained civic leaders who will bolster American democracy. Students who go through the program will undoubtedly strengthen the non-profits, businesses, or institutions that they will ultimately join — and this invaluable experience will enhance their future career prospects.

Continue reading to meet the **Donald K. Ross Future Leaders Program Class of 2024**, and please visit nypirg.org/futureleaders for more information or to support the program.



Donald K. Ross Future Leaders Program

Class of 2024



Chloe Jules — Queens College, Consumer Justice & Access to the Courts

“Attending committee meetings, writing bills, and analyzing and comprehending the statutes that govern the state have all been quite valuable experiences. I have gotten to impact and advocate for consumer justice issues firsthand by participating in coalition rallies, lobby meetings and news conferences, counseling clients in NYPIRG’s Small Claims Court Action Center, and by having my letter to the editor published in the *Times Union*.”

Elijah Mateo Wedderburn — BMCC, Voting Rights & Ethics Reform

“This program gave me direct exposure to New York’s state legislative process that has inspired me to be as active and impactful a citizen as I can be. I am more knowledgeable on policies that affect the lives of New Yorkers and how to effectively advocate across a range of issues that are vital to the functioning of government and the quality of life of the people it represents — through collaboration with lawmakers, the press, and other organizers.”



Kaylee M. Evans — SUNY Cortland, Climate & the Environment

“This program has taught me about New York State policymaking in a way a that a professor in a classroom cannot. I had the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with lawmakers and ask policy questions. I learned all about the state budget process and how policy gets passed through the budget every session. This program has also connected me to career opportunities through NYPIRG’s coalition partners in fields such as state policy, lobbying, and environmental justice.”

Michelle Mei — Hunter College, Higher Education

“Problem-solving and networking are two critical skills that this program helps develop. It is important to figure out complex problems thrown at you in advocacy work, especially with many perspectives and personalities involved to reach the common goal. The importance of connecting with government professionals and other organizations cannot be overstated. Advocates can understand stakeholders’ concerns and interests, and a support network can be developed and maintained.”



Nick Davydoff — Brooklyn College, Healthcare Access & Affordability

“Throughout this program, I have been exposed to New York State politics at a level that I couldn’t be if I was not in Albany and at the Capitol on most days. Some valuable skills that I have gained include talking to legislators and their staff about bills with confidence, and being able to build some rapport with them. While lobbying, I find that my experiences are unique with every meeting and legislator. I never feel like I’m having the same conversation twice, even about the same issue.”

