

HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS WORK EXPERIENCE



Report by Grace O'Brien

During the second week of May I took part in the Houses of the Oireachtas work experience programme. I was selected from applicants all across the country along with 25 other TY students. I had to write an application essay about an area of politics that interested me, and I chose women in politics.

Under normal circumstances, the programme would have taken place in Leinster House but because of Covid-19 restrictions it was held online instead. Each morning we had to complete a worksheet based on what we would be covering that day. Every day we spent a couple of hours learning about different aspects of the work of the Oireachtas, from the TDs to work of the committees.

We spoke to the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Feargháil, and he told us about the reality of being a TD and what his role in the Dáil is. As soon as he left the call, we were able to watch him in a sitting of the Dáil that was being held from an Oireachtas livestream. We also spoke with the Cathaoirleach, Mark Daly, and he told us how he came to be Cathaoirleach. He told us about his unusual career path and made clear to us that we sometimes just have to let opportunity collide with circumstances. In addition to this, we got to hear from a representative from the debates office and from the civil service.

One of the main activities of the week was the group project. We were put into groups of five and tasked with creating legislation to create change in a social issue. My group was assigned Leaving Cert reform. We came up with proposals and then presented them to the wider group on the Friday. I thoroughly enjoyed the week; it was really interesting to meet people who also like politics and are willing to give an opinion for any topic of discussion. I think I learned a lot from the week, and I think it will definitely benefit me in the future.