

# Letter from the Governor

Welcome, and welcome back, everyone to the  
2026–2027 New York State Youth and Government season!

I am Joyce Chen, and it is an incredible honor to serve as your 2026–2027 New York State Youth Governor. Youth & Government has given me countless opportunities to grow as a leader, meet people from across our state, and, most importantly, find my own voice. Outside of Youth and Government, I enjoy video games, baking, and hanging out with friends. I am incredibly excited to begin this season alongside all of you and to see what we will accomplish together.

Each year, the Youth Governor selects a theme that serves as a message and reminder for our delegates throughout the year and especially during conference.

This year's theme is Authenticity.



Youth & Government is centered around speaking, debating, writing, leadership, and representing others, but at its heart, it is a program about people. Every year, students from across New York come together with people they may have never otherwise met, allowing us to form friendships far past Albany. While the competitive aspects of this program can be exciting and motivate us to do our best, I hope we never lose sight of what makes Youth & Government truly special. A bill passing, a case winning, or a position being earned can be an incredible accomplishment, but those moments should never come at the expense of the relationships and community we build along the way. We are all here because we share a passion for this program, and I encourage you to look beyond the competition and take the time to appreciate the people standing beside you. That is where I believe authenticity becomes so important.

I implore you, delegates, not to approach every introduction as an opportunity to build your network or every relationship as a stepping stone toward your next position. There is so much more to this program than titles, positions, and climbing the ladder. Instead, take the time to meet people simply because you want to know them. Sit with someone from a different region. Talk to someone you have never spoken to before. Get to know someone whose background or perspective may be completely different from your own. You may come to Youth and Government expecting to make connections, but you might leave with friendships you never expected to make.

As your Youth Governor, I hope to help create a season in which every delegate feels encouraged to participate, connect with others, and discover something new about themselves. I cannot wait to see all of you in Albany and throughout the season! Until then, get involved! Apply for every application and involve yourself in every opportunity that Youth and Government has to offer.

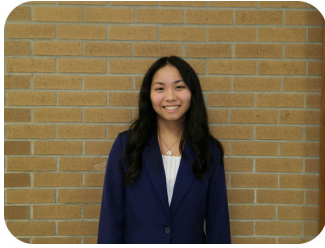


The Presiding Officers and I are committed to serving you and being a resource throughout this Youth & Government season. We are always here to answer questions, listen to your ideas, and help make your experience in this program as meaningful as possible. For New York State Youth & Government information and updates, please follow @neworkyag and @nysyouthgov on Instagram. If you ever have any questions, concerns, or simply want to reach out, please do not hesitate to contact me. My team and I are always happy to hear from you!

With much excitement and love,  
**Joyce Chen,**  
2027 New York State Youth Governor

A handwritten signature of Joyce Chen in black ink.

# Letter from the Lt. Governor



## Hello everyone!

My name is Erin Chen, and I am so excited to serve as your 2026–2027 New York State Youth Lieutenant Governor! This will be my fourth year in Youth and Government. In my free time, I enjoy playing volleyball, reading, and watching movies.

As Lieutenant Governor, my YMCA area of focus this year is social responsibility. This will be carried out through a service-learning project in which Youth and Government delegates get involved and positively impact their communities through service and learning. This encourages delegates to become civic-minded and socially conscious individuals beyond legislative debate or arguing a case in a mock government setting, shaping the future for positive change no matter how big or small the action is. Each school will have a Service-Learning Liaison to help facilitate and support the project.

With ever-increasing prices of necessities such as gas and rent, many families struggle to keep up. That is why this year's project will aid families that need help affording necessities, especially during harsh winters and the holiday season. Service-Learning Liaisons will identify specific needs in their community, potentially through surveys, and facilitate the collection of those items. Some items may include food, toiletries, coats, and more. Methods of collection will be discussed and brainstormed between liaisons based on what is the best fit for their school.

With the service-learning project, there are two types of hours. Service hours are community service hours that can be earned both through the project and through any other form of community service. Learning hours include hours of professional development and skill development in seminars, workshops, or through liaison-facilitated learning sessions. These hours can be logged through online trackers that will be sent out when the project is launched. Once the project is officially launched, more information will be sent out!

If you love service and leadership, I strongly suggest you apply to be a Service-Learning Liaison for your school! One liaison is chosen per school. More information about responsibilities will be included in a separate email about applications.

[Service-Learning Liaison Application](#)



Feel free to reach out to the @nysltgov Instagram with any questions!  
I'm so excited to work with you all this year!  
2026–27 Youth Lieutenant Governor, Erin Chen

[Service Hour Tracker](#)  
[Learning Hour Tracker](#)

Thank you for reading. I am so excited to work with you!  
**2027 Youth Lt. Governor, Erin Chen**

# Letter from the Chief Justice

## Welcome to all new and returning delegates!

Hi everyone! My name is Matthew Danielsen, and I will be serving as your Chief Justice for the 2026–2027 Youth and Government year. I am so excited to get to work with everyone in the program and to see everyone's growth in the appellate-court style of law. Whether it's your first time in a law program or not, the Judicial program allows students to develop their debating skills and grow as public speakers.



In Judicial, the program is split into two categories: Attorneys and Justices. Attorneys are split into partners, and each partner set is known as a team. Each team will be allotted 15 minutes to present their oral argument to the panel of justices and may split their time however they want. Each attorney team will have an opener and a closer. The opener will begin the round and leave the remaining time to their closer, who will finish the round. Throughout their argument, attorneys will be asked questions by the justices based on the facts of the case.



The cases are split into three difficulty levels: A, B, and C. Case A is the easiest and is recommended for new members of the program. Case B is in the middle, where some new members and veterans are assigned a medium-level case. Case C is the most advanced, where most veterans are assigned to take on the challenge. In addition to the argument, attorney teams will have to create a brief that includes a factual summary of the case and answers the case's main questions.



Justices in the Judicial program are tasked with understanding the facts of all three cases, guiding their attorneys throughout the year, and helping them prepare their briefs and arguments. All justices will be prepared to ask attorneys questions during their arguments. At the end of each round, all justices on the panel will deliberate to decide the winner of that round. If chosen as a justice, you will be required to attend the Judicial Steering Conference. For anyone interested in joining the Judicial program, whether as an attorney or as a justice, apply through the Judicial Application.

If you have any questions, please reach out on Instagram! @nys.chief.justice

I am so excited to see everyone soon, and I hope everyone had a great summer!

2027 Youth Chief Justice, Matthew Danielsen

# Additional Information

## National Youth Advocate Program

Every year, Y-USA brings high school students to Washington, D.C., to advocate for Y priorities alongside their local Y leaders during National Advocacy Days (2/28–3/3, 2027). This four-month advocacy training program gives students the opportunity to elevate their voice on issues important to the Y and provides practical, real-world experience advocating with members of Congress and their offices in Washington, D.C. The National Youth Advocate program is free for high school students who are accepted.

[Applications are due September 30, 2026.](#)

For more information, please visit the [www.ymcayag.org/yap](http://www.ymcayag.org/yap) or contact YAG state staff.

## Middle School Resource Team

The Middle School Resource Team is an opportunity for high school students in grades 10–12 to support the NYS Middle School Conference. This year's conference will be November 22–24, 2026, at the Desmond Hotel in Albany, NY. Below is the link to apply. The application is due September 25, 2026.

[Resource Team Application](#)

## Cabinet Application

The Youth Governor's Cabinet is a team of supporting officers that will help the Youth Governor review all the bills that come across the conference floor. Students on the cabinet should be experienced delegates who have been to at least one state conference, understand the legislative process, and are willing to put in the work for the team. There are 15 positions, which are listed below. The application for the cabinet is also below. The application is due September 25, 2026.

Cabinet Positions: Secretary to the Governor, Secretary of State, Commissioner of Labor, Superintendent of Financial Services, Commissioner of Family Assistance, Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, Commissioner of Education, Chairperson of Empire State Development, Commissioner of Transportation, Commissioner of Taxation and Finance, Commissioner of Correctional and Community Supervision, Commissioner of Health, Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets, Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, and Chairperson of NYS Public Service

[Cabinet Application](#)

## Youth Advocates Academy

NYS Youth Advocacy Days, where youth are invited to meet with New York State lawmakers about key issues impacting YMCAs like Youth and Government and afterschool programs is back with State Advocacy Day on February 8th–9th, 2027, and elevated to add local and federal advocacy components. This is a nine-month program that will engage participants in different forms of advocacy and engagement with the YMCA. Applications for this opportunity are due September 25, 2026.

[Youth Advocates Academy Application](#)