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LONE VOICE

*In a mock-government activity,
I knew I was outnumbered,
but I had to defend my beliefs.*

By Connor Jones

For months, I had heard about a week-long conference for young men held annually in my state. This conference had been promoted in my hometown as an opportunity to learn about government, meet people from across the state, and bolster my resume. However, upon arriving at the conference, I found that the young men surrounding me were much different than the ones I knew at home. They did not share my beliefs. It was difficult to see and hear my beliefs and values questioned by everyone around me.

Part of this conference included a simulated government setting where we could introduce mock bills and debate them. During the conference, a young man introduced a bill related to a moral issue that went against my beliefs. I felt prompted to stand and express my beliefs in relation to this issue, and to argue against passing the bill. Outnumbered by others who seemed to support this piece of legislation, I have never felt more completely alone.

Before I stood to speak, I offered a silent prayer: "Please, Heavenly Father, help me to speak the words Thou would have me say. Help me to be guided by Thy Spirit." I was a single voice amid a sea of opposing opinions, and speaking out was one of the most difficult experiences of my life—but I did it. I told the other young men that I believed that the issue was morally wrong. I encouraged them to reconsider their opinions, and to vote against passing the bill.

As I sat down, one young man, a member of the Church from a town near mine, nodded in my direction. To my dismay, however, the bill passed when put to the vote. I felt sad and as if I had somehow failed. At the end of the session, though, a couple of young men came up to me, including the one who had nodded at me, and thanked me for speaking up. I felt a warmth in my heart because I knew I had done the right thing. I couldn't control the choices the other young men made, but I could make my own and encourage them to do what I knew was right.

That week only became harder, but I was borne up by the feelings I had after I bore my testimony in that room. I hope I influenced someone for the better that week, but even if I didn't, I learned that when things become difficult, I can rely on the Lord. I learned that I can stand up for what is right, even if I have to stand alone.

The author lives in Wyoming, USA.

PROCEED WITH FAITH AND COMPASSION

"Live and respectfully share your beliefs. Have meaningful, kind conversations with those of differing beliefs. Focus on seeking to understand one another's perspective and finding common ground that unites you. While such discussions might create some tension, which occurs naturally in any democracy, if you proceed with faith and compassion rather than fear you'll often discover fair compromises that result in a stronger society."

From religiousfreedom.lds.org.