Riley Goltl of Palisade recently was selected to participate in the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA) Rural Electric Washington Youth Tour.

Riley was sponsored by Southwest Public Power District to attend the seven day tour in Washington, D.C. with 11 other students from across Rural Nebraska.

Each year in June the NREA and Southwest Public Power District sponsor high school students from across Nebraska for an all-expense-paid trip to the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour.

The trip gives participants an opportunity to learn first-hand about our nation's history and the pressing issues facing the energy industry. In addition, the experience fosters student's appreciation for the democratic process, builds leadership skills, and educates the students about the role rural electric systems have in the national economy.

While on the Youth Tour, Riley visited a number of our nation's capitol historic sites including the Capitol building, the National Mall and Smithsonian Institution, the Holocaust Museum, Mt. Vernon, and Gettysburg battlefield.

Students attended the Nebraska Breakfast with the entire Nebraska congressional delegation and had private meetings with Senator's Mike Johanns and Ben Nelson and Representatives Jeff Fortenberry and Adrian Smith.

To be selected for Youth Tour, students must first attend the NREA Youth Energy Camp in Halsey, NE, a weeklong leadership program for rural youth.

In addition to taking in the sights of the nation's capital, 1,500 students from rural areas across the U.S. convened for National Youth Day to learn from public figures and other inspirational speakers. This year's Youth Day agenda included Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist and two-time world Champion Wheelchair Basketball champion. Schlappi shares his inspiring message for every American, young or old: "Just because you can't stand up, doesn't

mean you can't stand out."

Students were also given a presentation on the history of rural electrification from the Father of Rural Electrification himself, Senator George Norris, played by former Nebraska state senator Dave Landis.

The NREA Youth Tour has been a joint effort of local rural electric providers, the NREA, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association for more than 45 years. Since 1964, more than 40,000 high school juniors and seniors have participated in the program.