

What I Learned from my Visit to the U.S.

by Karuna Parajuli



I'm really glad that I participated in the SUSI Public Policy and Government Leadership training in the U.S. in 2013. Traveling for more than 30 hours, we reached the other side of the globe, which was fascinating and exciting.

Our 5-week stay in Carbondale, Illinois and DC is worth remembering. The professors were very humble and approachable. The best part of the program was a weekend home stay with an American family at Chester, land of "Popeye." This exposed us to everyday American culture from eating American pie, to watching movies with the family, to playing golf, and visiting church. For me, the gun culture of the U.S. was the most surprising. Unlike Nepal, people in the U.S. legally possess firearms, making it totally unique throughout the world. The celebration of U.S. Independence Day at Kaskaskia Bell State Historic Site gave us opportunity to meet WWII veterans, former navies, war veterans and other local officials. I was spellbound, witnessing the annual firework display on the same night. A trip to Springfield gave us a glimpse of President Lincoln's home and also his tomb, both of which were preserved as historical sites.

Our 2-week stay in a dorm at Georgetown University in DC helped us understand university life in the States. An important part of this learning experience was the cultural exchange between participants from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar. SUSI taught us the importance of local government in policymaking. From this experience, I would say that, while Nepal is talking about federalism, we should focus on making local bodies more autonomous and workable rather than centralizing everything to the capital in Kathmandu.