

Governor Braun, Governor Whitmer, mayors, business leaders, Chairman Dobie, Chairman Inokuchi, and all other friends of Japan, good morning.

My name is Yuichi Oba, the new Consul-General of Japan in Chicago.

I arrived in Chicago just last week to assume my duties and this is the very first official event I have attended.

I have already heard so much about this exceptional region and the strong and enduring partnership it shares with Japan.

Today's conference is both a celebration of that partnership and an opportunity to strengthen it further.

I feel truly honored and excited to speak at such a prestigious conference. Thank you all for being here today.

First of all, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Governor Braun and the people of the State of Indiana for their warm welcome and generous hospitality.

I would also like to sincerely thank our MWJA Chairmen, Mr. Gordon Dobie, and Mr. Takeo Inokuchi, for their leadership in organizing this 56th conference.

I also want to recognize the dedication and invaluable role played by the two secretariats, who worked so hard with the State government to plan this event, as well as Ms. Theresa Kulczak and the Japan-America Society of Indiana, for their invaluable support.

Our partnership is ultimately built by people, by all of you here today. The connections between our countries are based on the work of communities, universities, businesses, and individuals.

The thousands of students who travel between Japan and the United States to study, and the more than 110 sister-state and sister-city connections between communities in the Midwest and Japan, are prime examples.

We are honored to have with us today Governor Ono of Saitama Prefecture, Governor Mikazuki of Shiga Prefecture, and Vice Governor Otsuka of Gunma Prefecture, representatives of prefectures with longstanding sister-state and sister-city relationships here in the Midwest.

I am also glad to see many from institutions with strong ties to Japan, such as Purdue University.

Through partnerships with Japanese universities and companies, Purdue University is helping develop the next generation workforce and advance semiconductor research in both countries.

These deep people-to-people connections go hand in hand with our strong economic ties.

I am proud to note that Japan is the number-one foreign direct investor in the United States, holding that position for seven consecutive years since 2019.

Japanese companies have invested more than \$820 billion in the United States and created more than one million American jobs, with about half of those jobs in manufacturing.

The Midwest accounts for a significant share of this investment. Across the Midwestern states, there are nearly 1,800 Japanese facilities employing approximately 290,000 people and investing nearly \$130 billion.

Here in Indiana, that includes Honda, SUBARU, and Toyota—three names familiar to all of us. Indiana is unique in being home to three major Japanese automotive manufacturers.

These investments go well beyond automobiles, though, spanning sectors from semiconductors to energy and from food to pharmaceuticals.

Japan is also a key trading partner for the Midwest with exports to Japan exceeding \$14.6 billion last year.

Japan is the Midwest's second-largest export market for pharmaceuticals and Indiana's largest. Japan is also the Midwest's largest export market for agricultural products outside North America.

Japan purchased nearly \$3 billion each in pharmaceutical and agricultural products from the Midwest in 2025, with Japan the top export market for both Midwest beef and pork.

Looking ahead, Japan is promoting the use of biofuels and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) as part of its efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions and strengthen energy security.

Japan has set a target of replacing 10% of the fuel used by Japanese airlines with SAF by 2030. In addition, Japan has made a new plan to expand biofuel use. In this plan Japan aims to start E10 blending by 2030 and E20 blending by 2040.

With the Midwest accounting for more than 93% of U.S. fuel

ethanol production, these efforts create new opportunities for cooperation between Japan and Midwest producers.

Beyond this, Japan and the United States have been committed to promoting cooperation that benefits both countries including the expansion of investment, and strengthening of economic security cooperation across a wide range of fields, such as energy, critical minerals, and key technologies including AI and quantum.

The Midwest stands to benefit significantly from these developments. They can create new opportunities for businesses, support jobs, and strengthen communities, further reinforcing our enduring economic ties.

And we are already seeing these opportunities translated into action, including here in Indiana, where Mitsubishi Materials is working with ReElement Technologies to strengthen the recycling and refining of rare earth elements, contributing to more resilient and sustainable supply chains between our two countries.

This conference brings together companies and leaders with expertise across these important fields.

From the Japanese side, representatives from SUBARU, ANA Holdings, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, AISIN, Kaneka, Kawasaki Heavy Industries, TOYOTA, and JETRO will share their perspectives and experiences on issues ranging from advanced manufacturing and Infrastructure to life sciences, semiconductors, AI, and critical minerals.

I look forward to hearing a wide range of ideas and perspectives from both Japan and the Midwest, and to learning from the insights and experiences shared throughout this conference.

The future of the Midwest-Japan relationship will be shaped by the dedication, creativity, and friendship of the people gathered here.

The ties we have built are strong, and the opportunities ahead of us are greater still. I am sure that the discussions at this conference will lead to new connections and cooperation that will help advance the ties between our countries and this great region.

I look forward to working with all of you to write the next chapter of this remarkable partnership.

Thank you very much.