

Consul-General Yuichi Oba Remarks

Welcome Reception hosted by the Japan America Society of Chicago
Monday, October 5th, 2026

Good evening everyone. 皆様、こんばんは。 Thank you all for being here this evening. Thank you for the kind introduction, Ella. Maybe I don't have to talk about myself any more.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Japan America Society of Chicago for hosting this wonderful welcome reception. I am truly grateful to Chairman Stephen Potter, President Bradley Hamm, Executive Director Marion Friebs-Flaman, and all the board members for your warm hospitality and for the opportunity to meet so many friends and partners of Japan.

And I also appreciate the time and effort you put into organizing this welcome reception for me at such a beautiful venue.

I arrived in Chicago on September 1. More than 1 month has already passed since then, and I have already seen so much support from the Japanese and Japanese American communities here. I appreciate it so much.

I already met some of you at the welcome reception CJAC hosted for me two weeks ago. But for those of you I am meeting for the first time today, please allow me to share a few things about myself, before my official remarks. My self-introduction may be a bit boring to those who attended the CJAC reception. But please kindly be patient for a while.

First, my name is Yuichi Oba. My first name "Yuichi" is common in Japan, but not so common here. I have been trying to figure out my nickname for many years, but I cannot think of any. You can call me, Yuichi, Yuichi-san, or Yu-san, but if you call me "YU" for short, it doesn't work because everybody looks back at you.

My family name, "OBA" is simpler. You can call me Mr Oba, Oba san, or whatever you like. But if you say オバ san, it means older woman in Japanese as some of you may understand. So please keep that in mind!

Next about my birthplace. I was born in Fukushima, the Tohoku region which is the Northern Part of Japan. My parents are still living there. Unfortunately, Fukushima became world-famous in 2011, 15 years ago, when a big earthquake and tsunami hit the region including my hometown and after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power plant was damaged by the tsunami.

I was moved to hear about the warm support extended by various organizations and individuals in Chicago following the earthquake, including JASC's substantial donations and initiatives such as a seminar "Japan: Road to Recovery — Challenges and Opportunities" and a lecture on "The Japanese Economy after the Earthquake and Tsunami."

As someone originally from Fukushima, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to JASC and the people of

Chicago for your friendship and support in the most difficult times.

Actually, I feel that Fukushima and Chicago have a lot in common. It's also cold and windy there, maybe not as much as Chicago. But I hope I can easily adjust myself to winter here. In addition, Chicagoans are very warm, kind and patient like people in Fukushima, including me.

Allow me to talk a little bit about my family. In Japan, normally on this kind of occasion we do not talk much about family. But my family is the most important part of my life, and when they come to Chicago they also play a certain role. So I have decided to introduce my family a little bit although they are not here today.

I am married. I have a daughter, 21 years old, and another little daughter who is a 9 year-old dog named Belle.

As you know, this is my first assignment in the US, but I have a secret weapon. That is my wife, Aki. She has very strong connections with the US.

My wife was born in Dallas Texas and brought up in LA and NY, as her father worked for a Japanese trading company specialized mainly in cotton. She lived in the US for more than 10 years in total, while I have been living in this country for about a month now. She speaks very good American!

I met her for the first time 30 years ago at a Christmas party held at the American Club in Tokyo. My first impression about her was "Oh she is very American". I don't go into details today for some reason. But looking back, maybe I was partly attracted to her American way. We've been married for almost 27 years now. Time flies. She has never been to Chicago before. She is looking forward to coming to Chicago soon with our dog, although they are a bit worried about winter.

My daughter, junior in university in Japan, always accompanied me in my previous overseas posts and she graduated from American High School in Thailand. She has friends in many places of the world, including Chicago. She is also eager to come and see her friend here, and hopefully her father as well.

Now that you've gotten to know a bit more about me, I'd like to move on to my official remarks about our partnership with the Japan America Society of Chicago.

Earlier today, Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae delivered her policy speech at the opening of the Diet. In her remarks, she stated:

> “The Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of Japan’s diplomacy and national security. We will further strengthen its deterrence and response capabilities and elevate the alliance to an even higher level.”

These words reaffirm Japan’s strong commitment to maintaining and further strengthening our enduring alliance with the United States.

Of course, the strength of the Japan-U.S. relationship is not built solely through the close relationship between our two governments. It is also built through the bonds between our people — through friendship, culture, education, business, and countless personal connections.

In this regard, the Japan America Society of Chicago has played an extremely important role.

For 96 years now, JASC has made great strides in promoting understanding of Japan across all fields – including culture, language, business, and grassroots exchanges. While Chicago is fortunate to have many Japan-related organizations dedicated to building cultural relations, JASC is unique in its broad range of activities, including its growing focus on strengthening economic ties in recent years. One of the key goals of our Consulate is to strengthen and expand Japan’s overall presence and advance all ties here in the Midwest. That is why our longstanding partnership with JASC is so important.

Just a few days after I arrived in Chicago at the beginning of September, I had the opportunity to attend the Annual Joint Meeting of the Japan-Midwest U.S. Association in Indiana. The meeting was a strong reminder of the depth of the Japan-Midwest relationship and the importance of our future partnership.

I truly appreciate JASC’s commitment to advancing economic ties - whether it is through cultivating stronger connections with Japanese companies, or leading initiatives and programming. For example, this year we organized a business seminar on current developments in Japan’s business climate and the significance of the Midwest for Japan, and cooperated on a seminar on AI which is a new area of cooperation in our current society.

At the same time, JASC has helped strengthen cultural ties between our two countries through important initiatives such as the annual Illinois Japan Bowl, the Cultural Achievement Award, and the Nambu Award Program. Also, JASC has been a longstanding partner of Japanese Speech Contests the Consulate hosts every February and March.

On that note, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan recently announced the recipients of the Foreign Minister’s Commendations for 2026. One of the 3 award recipients from our jurisdiction is none other than Chairman Stephen Potter. Congratulations, Mr. Potter!

Mr. Potter’s many years of strong leadership of JASC and commitment to Japan-U.S. relations make him most deserving of this honor. This year also marks JASC’s 96th anniversary as well as its 40th Bonenkai in December, and I look forward to joining you in celebrating Mr. Potter’s achievements and these significant milestones.

It has now been a little more than a month since I first arrived in Chicago, and I have already been shown so much kindness and support from you all. I hope to return the favor by honoring and building upon the Consulate’s

friendship with JASC, and by doing everything I can to support your efforts to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. relationship.

The partnership between our two countries is built upon the collective efforts of each and every one of you.

I am truly grateful for your continued commitment to fostering lasting bonds of trust and friendship between Japan and the United States.

Thank you all again for welcoming me this evening.