

October 31, 2024

Fall is in full swing; it is the time of the season to appreciate the autumn leaves in bright reds and yellows in Wisconsin and the Anderson Japanese Garden.

From October 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, Governor Pritzker of Illinois led an economic and trade mission to Japan. The Governor's visit provided an excellent opportunity to build and strengthen US Japan relations. I had an opportunity to talk with Governor Pritzker before his visit to discuss the Japan's political and economic situation and the Japan-U.S. relationship.



With the staff of Official Residence



With Governor Pritzker

For this month's "Monthly Reflection," I would like to introduce three examples that form the foundation of strong U.S.-Japan relations, which have been maintained for the past 20, 30, and even 50 years. These include both state-level economic partnerships and grassroots exchanges, with a reciprocal circulation of these two elements.

### **1. 26<sup>th</sup> Greater Kansas City Japan Festival**

On October 5, I attended the Greater Kansas City Japan Festival. This annual event attracts thousands of visitors each year, including many Japanese and Americans. Participants included our Consulate's honorary consul, Japanese residents of the area, students and faculty from supplementary schools, JETAA members, Japanese studies students from various universities, the Japan-America Society, and

Japanese companies. The number of Japanese residents in the Kansas City area has increased with the addition of the Panasonic factory, and the Japanese community's involvement in the festival is becoming increasingly active. Lt. Governor David Toland and his wife also visited the event and enjoyed traditional music and Ikebana with us.

On the previous day, the 4th, we met with members of the Sister Cities Lawrence-Hiratsuka. The sister city relation was established in 1990 and the cities continue a close connection with home-stay programs for junior high school students. After the meeting, we moved to the Johnson County Community College where the Japan Festival was held for a talk session with students and residents. This was the first time to have an interactive dialogue with no script prepared, to "talk with" rather than "talk to" the audience of about 60 attendees.



With Mr. and Ms. Tolan

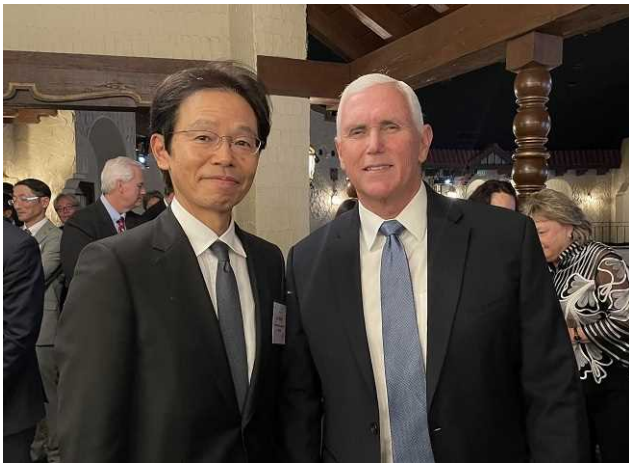


Talk with students and residents

## **2. Japan-America Society of Indiana Gala**

After traveling to Iowa and Minnesota with Ambassador Yamada October 14-16, I headed to Indianapolis on October 17 to attend the annual gala hosted by the Japan-America Society of Indiana (JASI). Former Vice President (and former Governor) Mike Pence attended with his wife. I had the opportunity to sit next to them for dinner and chat with them. Former Vice President Pence led the applause when I said "The U.S. and Japan stand united" in my greeting. In his keynote speech, Vice President Pence said, "Consul General Yanagi reminded me of my favorite Japanese word – '*kizuna*' – that I learned during my

first visit to Japan,” referring to the content of my greeting (“U.S. leadership is needed as the international order that the U.S. has built up over the years is under challenge”). I sounded a warning against the trend of isolationism creeping into society. My greeting and former Vice President Pence's keynote speech resonated with each other. The JASI is not limited to grassroots exchanges, but also works with the Indiana Japan Chamber (an organization of mainly Japanese businesspeople) on many business-oriented projects and has established relationships with key figures in state politics. About 350 people attended this year's gala. I am always impressed by JASI's – including Executive Director Theresa's – many years of achievements, planning and execution skills, and personal connections.



Vice President Mike Pence



Greetings at the JASI Gala

### **3. Nebraska Kawasaki 50th Anniversary**

On October 23, I joined the 50th anniversary celebration of Kawasaki's plant (KMM) in Lincoln, Nebraska. Governor Pillen, U.S. Senator Fischer, U.S. Senator Ricketts (former Governor), U.S. Representative Flood, and the mayor of Lincoln attended from the stateside, and President Hashimoto of Kawasaki's headquarters, as well as presidents and executives from group and affiliated companies, gathered from Japan and the United States. The strong presence of high-level executives from Japan and the U.S. symbolizes the importance of KMM to both parties.



KMM was established as a motorcycle manufacturing division. It is a “pioneer” that has led Japanese manufacturing in the United States. The star of this series of events is Mike Boyle, president of Kawasaki, who has worked for Kawasaki for over 40 years. According to President Boyle, “At KMM, we combine the attention to detail and training qualities of the Japanese with the ingenuity and creativity of the Americans”. He is more attentive in a Japanese way than the Japanese – He has earned the trust of both Japan’s executives at Kawasaki Heavy Industries’ headquarters and the U.S. employees of Kawasaki. He is also highly regarded by Nebraskans for being an American at the top of a Japanese company.

Together with Senator Ricketts and others, we visited the manufacturing site of Kawasaki’s current products, which included multi-purpose consumer vehicles, railcars, and aircraft cargo doors. We were briefed on the *Kawasaki Manufacturing System*, which is based on the principles of “thorough elimination of waste” and “keeping the manufacturing site tidy and organized.”

After the ceremony, I visited the Kawasaki Reading Room, which was established in 1992 with support from Kawasaki. It is a hub for disseminating Japanese culture and language to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and local residents. I presented Director Madoka Sato, who has worked at the library for 11 years, the award of Consul-General’s Commendation. I also visited the historic “Miss Mie” Friendship Doll, which is kept in the University’s Museum. She is one of the 58 dolls sent by Japan in 1927 as a response to the 12,000 “blue-eyed dolls” sent by the U.S. to ease political tensions between the two countries. The year 2027 will mark the 100th anniversary of this Japan-U.S. doll exchange.



Governor Pillemer



Kawasaki 50th Anniversary Ceremony



UNL's Kawasaki Reading Room



"Miss Mie" Friendship Doll