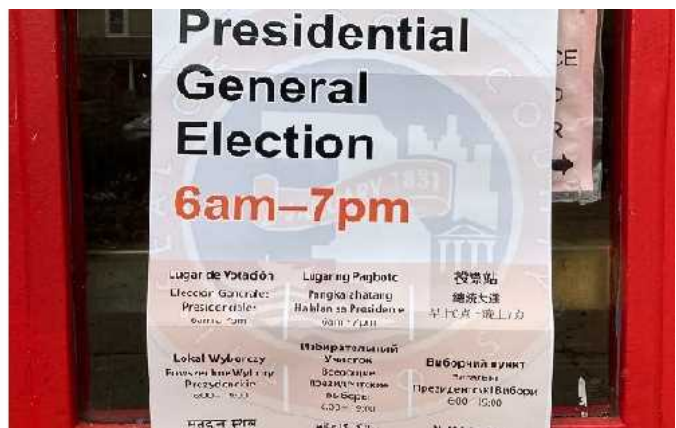


## November 2024

On November 5th, Election Day, I stopped by several polling stations on my way to work. There were no long queues at the polling station in the area, and the atmosphere was quiet and calm. I spotted some people cheering "congratulations" for the young voters who were exercising their right to vote for the first time. In addition to the presidential election, there were also elections for federal representatives, state representatives, judicial retention votes, and, in some states, elections for federal senators and governors. The ballots consisted of two large pieces of tabloid-sized paper, filled with boxes to fill in. Many people were checking their smartphones to make sure they did not make any mistakes and write in who they were voting for.



Voting Poll at local school



Guide in multi-language

Within the ten states under the Consulate's jurisdiction, Mike Braun was elected as the new Governor of Indiana, Mike Kehoe as Governor of Missouri, and Kelly Armstrong as Governor of North Dakota. All three states are considered strongholds of the Republican Party, and the candidates who won the Republican Party's primary elections were elected. Their inauguration ceremonies will be held in January.

Governor John H. Burgum of North Dakota, whose term is ending, has been nominated to be Secretary of the Interior. He will also head the newly established National Energy Commission. Governor Dennis Daugaard of South Dakota, who dispatched National Guard troops to help with border security in Texas, has been nominated as Secretary of Homeland Security. If the U.S. Senate approves his nomination, South Dakota's Lieutenant Governor Dennis Roden, who visited Japan in June this year, will be promoted to Governor of South Dakota.



Governor Burgum



Lieutenant Governor Roden

## **1. Milwaukee Japan Fest**

The Milwaukee Japanese Association temporarily suspended its activities for the past decade due to the aging of its members as well as the impact of the pandemic. However, last year they resumed activities with a new generation of leaders. The association is run by a few volunteers. There are no membership fees, no formal registration, and not even a member list. They operate using a simple mailing list to people who have registered their email addresses.

On November 3rd, I participated in Milwaukee Japan Fest. The festival was held in a cafeteria space, approximately the size of a high school gym. The space was filled with stalls selling food such as handmade rice balls, curry, bread, yakisoba, drinks, desserts and other goods. There were also performances by the local Hibiki Taiko, the Chicago-based Mikoren Awa Odori, and bon-odori by the students of the Doyokai school. A total of around three hundred people visited the event and it was also nice to see people who does not share Japanese heritage were also invested in the festival as much as the Japanese and Japanese Americans.

I heard that members from the Japanese Association of Madison were also present. The Japanese Associations of both cities agreed to work together. Both cities are within the daytrip range from the Consulate-General. We would love to support the various Japanese-related organizations and actors in the two cities as they deepen their corporations.



## **2. IOWA SAKE Event 「Night in Izakaya」**

On November 8th, the Japan America Society of Iowa (JASI) held its annual sake event. This year, JASI recreated an *izakaya*, a traditional Japanese pub. They transformed a large warehouse into a party venue by hanging paper lanterns, recreating the *izakaya yokocho* alleyway. Along with a variety of sake, a range of foods was served, including sushi prepared by a sushi chef who is the son of JASI's secretary-general, as well as *buta-don*, *yakitori*, *tamago-yaki*, *okonomiyaki*, and *dango*. The event also featured a taiko performance by SOTEN, a Bon-Odori dance, a silent auction, and much more.

JASI has shown to be very actively engaged and thriving in the past few years. This time, they scheduled the event on the same day as the business networking event, which successfully attracted large participants from universities, sister cities and Japanese companies in the state. I was truly impressed by their organizing and management skills, as well as their vibrant energy and ability to bring people together.

Sake, made from water and rice, reflects the climate and culture of each Japanese region. It is an expression of Japanese culture itself. Learning about sake is a way of learning about the different regions of Japan. It goes well with a wide range of dishes, not just Japanese food, but also French, Italian, Chinese, and more. Hopefully, it will be inscribed as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in the near future, with the aim of becoming a “worldwide drink” that will be loved around the world.



## **3. Trip to Minnesota, "America's Refrigerator"**

Arranged by "Global Minnesota," a non-profit international relations organization, a business seminar was held at MGK Company, a Japanese-affiliated company (parent company is Sumitomo Chemical), and a lecture was given at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Policy to an audience of students and residents. The audience asked a variety of questions ranging from the political situation in Japan after the general election, Japan-Korea relations, Japan's expected response to potential Taiwan



emergency, evaluation of the U.S. government's handling of the political affairs, and the situation in East Asia in 50 years.

On Saturday, I visited the Minnesota Japanese School in Edina. The steering committee, made up of parents, gave us a briefing and showed us the classrooms. Basically, all parents play some kind of role in the school, including steering committee members, teachers, and various committees. I felt a strong sense of commitment and ownership from the parents. The school is a reliable presence for Japanese companies and expatriates. Some of the students may become future bridges between the U.S. and Japan.

Dr. Andreas Marks, curator at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, was selected as one of this year's recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendation. Dr. Marks is a specialist in Japanese art who has curated art exhibitions around the world and published 24 books on Japanese art. The Minneapolis Institute of Art is also proud of its Japanese collection, to which Dr. Marks has made significant contributions.

The Japan-America Society of Minnesota Gala is also an awards and scholarship ceremony named for the late Mr. Mondale, who served as Vice President and Ambassador to Japan. Even after his retirement, Mr. Mondale remained a man of great kindness, much admired by many, and dedicated to nurturing the next generation and promoting people-to-people exchanges between Japan and Minnesota.

I sat next to his son at the dinner. His mother, Mrs. Joan Mondale, was nicknamed "Joan of Art" for her patronage of the arts, and as the ambassador's wife, she devoted herself to cultural exchange by avidly studying Japanese art and creating ceramics. After returning to Japan, she also published a collection of essays about her stay in Japan. I happened to find an exhibit of Mrs. Mondale's work at the university I had visited the day before. "The arts are essential to our lives. They offer food for the spirit and the soul" - Joan Mondale.



Dr. Mark and his friends



The Gala



Mr. and Ms. Mondale

## **4. St. Louis**

St. Louis is home to one of the largest Japanese gardens in North America, the largest Japanese festival in the Midwest, and the St. Louis Cardinals, whose roster includes Japanese American player Lars Nootbaar. The city is also the sister city of Suwa City in Nagano Prefecture, which celebrated its 50th anniversary of its sister-city relationship this year.

Thirty years ago, when the then Emperor and Empress of Japan visited the United States, St. Louis was the only city in the Midwest that their Majesties visited. Remnants of their visit still can still be found in St. Louis. During my trip, I found a local newspaper article from June 1994 in the library. Their visit included a welcome ceremony at the Gateway Arch, a reception hosted by the welcoming committee at the Saint Louis Art Museum, a visit to the Missouri Botanical Garden with a commemorative tree planting ceremony attended by volunteers from the botanical garden, Japanese Americans, and Japanese residents in the area, and a luncheon hosted by the welcoming committee at the Missouri History Museum. The article says that Their Majesties waved to the large crowd cheering to them when the words “We wholeheartedly welcome Their Majesties” appeared on the electronic scoreboard during the Cardinals-Pirates game at Busch Stadium.

After attending the Japan-America Society of St. Louis's dinner, Professor Nori Katagiri kindly arranged a talk session with students at St. Louis University. The students, mostly undergraduates, asked enticing questions ranging from the security environment in East Asia, the issue of constitutional reform, the Japanese economy, the Global South, and other topics. I was amazed on their very well-informed questions. There were some questions that really made me sit up and think, and it was like an intellectual wrestling match. I told the students, who will be the future leaders of Japan-U.S. and international relations, that I wanted them to be invested in international affairs, including Japan, and that I wanted them to become future opinion leaders of global world. I like to believe that they had taken it on board.



Dinner at Japan America Society



Discussion with the students