

# NEWS RELEASE



**Consulate-General  
of Japan in Chicago**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **The Foreign Minister's Commendations for 2026**

On September 24th, 2026, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan announced the recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendations for 2026.

[Recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendation for 2026](#)

Within the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago's jurisdiction, the following two individuals and one group have been selected.

### **1. Mr. Stephen N. Potter, Chairman, Japan America Society of Chicago (JASC)**

Since assuming the position of Chairman of the Japan America Society of Chicago in 2019, Mr. Potter has led seminars and lectures featuring high-level experts and cultural figures, and is dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and the United States, as well as advancing Japanese cultural programs and Japanese language education.

In particular, JASC's online initiatives conducted in cooperation with prefectural governments to showcase the appeal of history, culture, economy, and cuisine of various regions in Japan to the United States achieved remarkable results in promoting understanding of Japan, attracting participants not only from the U.S. Midwest but also from across the entire United States and overseas.

In recent years, his proactive hosting of seminars on trade, investment, and AI for stakeholders of Japanese and American companies has also contributed to strengthening economic cooperation between the two countries.

### **2. Mr. Tetsuro Mitani, Executive Director, The Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chicago (JCCC)**

Since joining the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chicago in 1982 and assuming the position of Executive Director in 2010, Mr. Mitani has devoted himself to the JCCC's operations and the promotion of exchange within the Japanese and Japanese-American community for many years.

He has worked to strengthen this foundation by partnering with the Chicago Japanese American Council to hold networking events connecting Japanese and Japanese-American organizations with Japanese companies, and has implemented various events aimed at revitalizing exchange among diverse communities—including groups of long-established second-generation and third-generation Japanese-American local residents, as well as new first-generation and new second-generation

immigrants, expatriates of Japanese companies, and Japanese nationals employed here locally.

He has served as a bridge between all Japan-related organizations, significantly contributing to building relationships of trust within local communities and furthering the Japanese and Japanese-American community.

### **3. Illinois Association of Teachers of Japanese**

The Illinois Association of Teachers of Japanese was established in 1990 and has dedicated more than 35 years to supporting and training Japanese language educators who serve students of any age across the state.

The organization strives to assist teachers' professional development by holding training workshops twice a year and broadening the reach of Japanese language education through its collaboration with the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago in organizing the Japanese Language Speech Contest.

In addition, the association contributes to the sustainable development of Japanese language education in Illinois by supporting the recruitment of replacement teachers, engaging with schools at risk of scaling back or discontinuing their Japanese programs, and reaching out to schools that do not yet offer Japanese programs.

For more information, please contact the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago at 312-280-0400.

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