

THE GROWING TIES BETWEEN TEXAS & JAPAN



(L-R) Cole Chemical CEO and USJC Board Member and Summit Chair Donna Cole, Aichi Prefecture Governor Hideaki Ohmura, USJC President Irene Hirano Inouye, CityView Founder and Chairman Henry Cisneros, who was once mayor of San Antonio and a former HUD secretary, during the Japan-Texas Economic Summit.

In May 2018, the U.S.-Japan Council (USJC) held the first ever Japan-Texas Economic Summit (JTES) in Houston, Texas. Aimed at strengthening Japan-Texas relations, the event brought together more than 400 government and private sector leaders from nearly 50 cities and organizations from Houston and Japan.

Texas has quickly become one of Japan's top destinations for foreign direct investment. As of 2016, total exports and imports exceeded \$6.1 billion and \$4.9 billion respectively. Additionally, over 400 Japanese companies have created more than 50,000 jobs in the state.

Texas Secretary of State Rolando Pablos is optimistic about the enormous potential for closer collaboration and growth in the years ahead. "We are honored that Texas is home to one of the first U.S.-Japan Council regional summits that underscores the importance of Japan's partnership with the Lone Star State," he said.

Business leaders, investors, state and local officials, and economic development organizations played an integral role in the launch of the summit. Aside from Pablos, high-profile organizers included Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, Japan External Trade Organization's Executive Vice President Shigeki Maeda and Aichi Prefecture Gov.

Hideaki Ohmura.

Additionally, the heads of companies, such as Toyota Motor Corp., Ito En Ltd. and Cole Chemical, gave keynote addresses regarding the latest industry developments, including topics and sectors such as innovation, workforce development, energy, medicine, manufacturing, transportation, finance and national security.

Donna Cole, founder and CEO of Cole Chemical and a board member of the USJC, chaired the event.

"My involvement with the USJC inspired me to be proud of my Japanese and American heritage and to develop personal business relationships. Building these kinds of people-to-people relationships was a big driving factor for the summit, as was discussing best business practices to foster economic growth on both ends," Cole said.

"I continue to receive congratulatory notes on the success of the JTES. I have reached out to most of the high-caliber speakers from the event to assist them in finding mutual business connections. Personally, I have had several meetings to increase Cole Chemical's business with our enhanced hydrocarbon recovery products and have referred dozens of people with shared business interests," Cole said. ■

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