The Japan-America Society of Houston is the leading organization that connects Houston’s diverse community, local businesses, and individuals to advance the mutual interest of American and Japanese peoples.

Our programs in language and education, arts and culture, and business initiatives and networking provide opportunities for collaboration and important people-to-people exchange.

The Japan-America Society of Houston, with the support of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the National Association of Japan-America Societies, has organized this Japan Update Conference as the centerpiece this year of its mission to promote mutual understanding between the United States and Japan.

Designed to report on aspects of the local impact of United States-Japan relations, the conference brings together speakers from Japan, other areas of the United States and the community of Houston and its surrounding areas. The conference is designed to facilitate dialogue between Japanese and American businesses and professionals and to offer perspectives on the trends, challenges and strategies shaping the U.S.-Japan alliance.

This program is a part of a larger series of Japan Update presentations sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the National Association of Japan America Societies throughout the United States that seek to stimulate public interest in contemporary issues faced by Japan and the United States. The series provides an important forum for information exchange at a time of increased interest in the United States-Japan bilateral relationship.

We trust that the Japan Update held today will offer those attending a better understanding of the implications of security, trade and energy issues for both Japan and the United States.
The Japan-Houston Relationship in the New U.S.-Japan Dynamic

Friday, February 19, 2016
PETROLEUM CLUB OF HOUSTON

8:30 AM | Breakfast & Greetings

WILLIAM H. WEILAND
President, Japan-America Society of Houston

ANDREW SCHNEIDER
Master of Ceremonies
Reporter, Houston Public Media

PETER KELLEY
President
National Association of Japan-America Societies

9:30 AM | Keynote Address

ADMIRAL DENNIS BLAIR
Chairman of the Board and CEO of Sasakawa USA
Former Director of U.S. National Intelligence
Former Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command

10:00 AM | Trade & Investment Panel

AMBASSADOR THOMAS SCHIEFFER
Former U.S. Ambassador to Japan

BOB HARVEY
President and CEO, Greater Houston Partnership

MARC WATTS
President, The Friedkin Group Inc.

GEORGE AVDEY
President, Kuraray America, Inc.

11:15 AM | Energy Panel

PROF. HISANORI NEI
Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Study

DR. MICHELLE FOSS
Chief Energy Economist, Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas at Austin

TADASHI ISHIZUKA
Chief Operating Officer, Mitsui & Co. LNG Investment USA, Inc.
Andrew Schneider

Andrew heads Houston Public Media’s coverage of national, state, and local elections. He also reports on major policy issues before the Texas delegations in the U.S. House and Senate, as well as the Texas governorship, the state legislature, and county and city governments. Before taking up his current post, Andrew spent five years as Houston Public Media’s business reporter, covering the oil and gas industry and other issues affecting the regional and state economies. He also served as the station’s occasional foreign correspondent, reporting from Afghanistan in 2013 and Germany in 2015. Andrew’s work has aired on NPR’s Morning Edition, All Things Considered, and Here & Now, as well as internationally on the BBC World Service.

Before moving to Houston, Andrew spent more than a decade in Washington, D.C. as a reporter for The Kiplinger Letter. He holds degrees in history from the University of Chicago and Duke University.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Admiral Dennis Blair

Admiral Dennis Blair, Chairman of the Board and CEO of Sasakawa USA, is a renowned expert on Asia Pacific policy and issues. He also serves as a member of the Energy Security Leadership Council and the Aspen Homeland Security Council; and he is on the boards of Freedom House, the National Bureau of Asian Research and the National Committee on US-China Relations.

As Director of National Intelligence, from January 2009 to May 2010, Blair led sixteen national intelligence agencies, managed a budget of $50 billion and provided integrated intelligence support to the President, Congress and operations in the field.

Blair was president and chief executive officer of the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), a federally funded research and development center, that supports the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security and the Intelligence Community, from 2003 to 2006.

During his 34-year Navy career, Blair served on guided missile destroyers in both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets and commanded the Kitty Hawk Battle Group. Ashore, he served as Director of the Joint Staff and held budget and policy positions on the National Security Council and several major Navy staffs. Prior to retiring from the Navy in 2002, Blair served as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, the largest of the combatant commands.

Blair has served as a director of both public and private corporations, including Tyco International, EDO Corporation (now part of L-3, Inc.), and Iridium LLC (now a public corporation). He resigned from all board positions when he re-entered government in 2009. He currently is a consultant for Lockheed Martin Space Systems and the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company, North America.


A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Blair earned a master’s degree in history and languages from Oxford University as a Rhodes scholar and was a White House fellow at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He has been awarded four Defense Distinguished Service medals, three National Intelligence Distinguished Service medals, and has received decorations from the governments of Japan, Thailand, Korea, Australia, the Philippines and Taiwan.
Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer

J. Thomas Schieffer is the founder and CEO of Envoy International LLC, a consulting firm that provides a wide range of advice to companies with international interests. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Japan from 2005-2009 and U.S. Ambassador to Australia from 2001-2005. Prior to his diplomatic service Ambassador Schieffer was a partner in the Texas Rangers baseball team. In 1989 he joined the partnership headed by George W. Bush and Rusty Rose that purchased the Texas Rangers Baseball Club. Originally just an investor, Schieffer was named partner-in-charge of Ballpark Development in 1990, President of the Club in 1990 and Co-Managing Partner with Rose in 1994 when George W. Bush assumed office as Governor of Texas. He was inducted into the Texas Rangers Baseball Hall of Fame on August 23, 2014 for his contributions to the franchise. At the age of 25 Ambassador Schieffer was elected to the Texas House of Representatives and served three terms. He remained active in Texas politics after leaving the Legislature. A lawyer by trade, Ambassador Schieffer has a long history of involvement in the oil and gas business. A much decorated diplomat, Ambassador Schieffer has been recognized repeatedly for his leadership and organizational skills, particularly in the area of intelligence. In November 2013, he was presented with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun by the Emperor of Japan to recognize his significant contributions in promoting friendly relations and understanding between the United States and Japan. He was also decorated by the government of Australia, the Secretary of Defense and five agencies of the U.S. government for his service. Ambassador Schieffer attended the University of Texas, where he earned a B.A. in government, an M.A. in international relations, and studied law. He was admitted to the State Bar of Texas in 1979.

Bob Harvey

Bob Harvey joined the Greater Houston Partnership as President and CEO in September 2012. Harvey is the fourth President and CEO of the Partnership since it was formed in 1989 in a merger of the Greater Houston Chamber of Commerce, the Houston Economic Development Council and the Houston World Trade Center. Harvey is committed to enhancing the Partnership’s effectiveness as “the voice of business” in the 10-county Greater Houston area. He has emphasized the importance of “quality of life” issues in achieving the Partnership’s mission of enhancing regional economic prosperity. In addition to its role as the principal regional economic development organization and primary advocate for sound public policy, the Partnership, under Harvey’s leadership, is convening community leaders in order to gain consensus on the key issues facing the region and the appropriate response. Prior to joining the Partnership, Harvey was active in the Houston business community, first as a management consultant in the Houston office of McKinsey & Company, Inc. for 17 years and then as Vice Chair/Executive Vice President with Reliant Energy for six years. After leaving Reliant in 2005, Harvey served in a variety of community volunteer leadership roles. He chaired the board of the United Way of Greater Houston from 2007-2010. Harvey was Board Chair of The Post Oak School, a pre-K through 9th grade Montessori school in Houston, from 2008-2011, and Board Chair of the Texas A&M Foundation from 2003-2004. Harvey has also served on the boards of Central Houston, Inc., Houston Technology Center, Houston Zoo, Inc., the Houston Zoological Society and the Association of Former Students of Texas A&M University. Harvey currently serves on the Community Foundation Council of the Greater Houston Community Foundation and the boards of St. John’s School, the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Center for Houston’s Future, and the Alliance For Kids, as well as the Board of Regents of Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.
PANELIST

Mark Watts

Effective January 1, 2011 Mr. Watts joined The Friedkin Group as President. The Friedkin Group serves as an umbrella company overseeing business interests that are principally automotive related, including Gulf States Toyota, Inc., a wholesale distributor of Toyota vehicles and products, and various private investments, including companies specializing in real estate, healthcare and hospitality.

Prior to joining The Friedkin Group, Mr. Watts was Vice Chairman and Managing Partner-Houston of the 700-attorney law firm of Locke Lord LLP, with over 26 years of experience in corporate and securities law, governance and related matters.

Education

• J.D., cum laude, Harvard Law School, 1984
• B.S., summa cum laude, Texas A&M University, 1980

Professional Affiliations

• Board of Directors, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas (Houston Branch)
• Board of Directors, Service Corporation International
• Board of Directors, Highland Resources, Inc.
• Board of Directors, The Awty International School

Community Leadership

• Board Chair, United Way of Greater Houston, 2015-2016, Campaign Chair, 2014
• Board and Executive Committee Member, Greater Houston Partnership
• Past Chairman, Houston Area Advisory Board, Salvation Army
• Past Chairman, Board Member, Society for the Performing Arts
• Board Member, YMCA
• Board Member, American Diabetes Association of Houston
• Board of Trustees Member, Houston Ballet Foundation

Memberships

• River Oaks Country Club, Houston, TX
• Lakeside Country Club, Houston, TX
• Diamond Creek Golf Club, Banner Elk, NC
• Castle Pines Golf Club, Castle Rock, CO

PANELIST

George Avdey

George Avdey is the President and CEO of Kuraray America, Inc., and an Executive Officer of Kuraray Co. Ltd.

Kuraray America is Kuraray’s largest overseas company with world scale production operations for Evaltm EVOH, Kuraray Poval PVOH, Elvanoltm PVOH, Septontm thermoplastic elastomeric materials, vinyl acetate monomer, PVB resin, Butacite tm PVB films, and Vectran tm liquid crystal polymer (LCP) fibers. Kuraray America imports and sells other Kuraray specialty polymers, chemicals, fibers and functional materials. Kuraray America is based in Houston, TX.

George was named President and CEO effective in April 1, 2012. Prior to this appointment he was the VP and General Manager of the Kuraray’s Eval Business Unit since 2007. He joined Kuraray in 2000 as the VP of Sales and Marketing for the Eval Business Unit.

Prior to joining Kuraray, George spent 9 years at Chevron Chemicals in various leadership positions, 2 years with GE Plastics and 16 years with Borg-Warner Chemicals.
Prof. Hisanori Nei

Mr. Hisanori Nei joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in 1981 after graduating from University of Tokyo at Faculty of Science majoring in Geology. After several positions in Tokyo, he served as Executive Director of JETRO Houston from 1997 to 2000. During his time in Texas, he supported several programs to coordinate energy security policy between the two countries. He also studied business incubation and technology transfer by being a member of AUM and NBIA. Based on this, he supported to establish Houston Technology Center. From 2001 to 2003, he worked on energy security policy as the Director of Middle East and Africa Office and the Director of Petroleum Refining and Reserve Division at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). At that time he focused on making the Ministry’s policy after the September 11 attacks. Then he was dispatched to the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in Iraq after the war in 2003 to support the reconstruction effort of Iraq. After that, he was engaged in the assistance for developing countries especially in Asia and Africa as the Director of the Technical Cooperation Division, METI. From 2005 to 2008, he served as the Director of the Nuclear Power Inspection Division, Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), METI. He worked on the reform of the regulations and rules for inspection to Japanese nuclear power plants. After three years, NISA finalized the reform of its inspection rules in August, 2008. At the same time, he worked as a spokesperson for serious incidents such as Chuetsu-Oki earthquake which caused serious damage over the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Station. After serving as the Director General, Tohoku Regional Bureau of METI, he was promoted to the Deputy Director General, Nuclear Fuel Cycle Safety, NISA, METI in July, 2009. At the NISA, he served as the chief inspector when the MONJU or FBR resumed its operation 15 years after shutting down due to some trouble. When the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 hit the Fukushima-Daiichi, TEPCO, he coordinated with the U.S. counterparts and worked on the Government Official Report to the IAEA. In June 2011, he was assigned as the Councillor at the Cabinet Secretariat for restoring the Nuclear Accident. From April 2012 to March 2014, he served as the Executive Director, at Japan National Oil, Gas and Metals Corporation (JOGMEC).

Dr. Michelle Michot Foss

Dr. Michelle Michot Foss is the Chief Energy Economist at the Center for Energy Economics (CEE), Bureau of Economic Geology, The University of Texas at Austin. At CEE, Dr. Michot Foss develops and directs research on economics of the energy value chains and commercial frameworks to support energy investment. She coordinates and implements activities in support of major BEG projects and initiatives, including the Gulf Coast Carbon Center and FutureGen Texas; worldwide energy resource assessment studies and related information management; and other programs. Dr. Michot Foss has twenty-nine years of experience in energy and environmental research and consulting (oil and gas, coal, non-fuel minerals, electric power) in the US; has advised US and international energy companies; publishes and speaks widely on energy issues; and provides public commentary and testimony to governments. Worldwide experience includes Canada and Mexico; South America; Russia and the Caspian; Western Europe and Turkey; West Africa and Angola; and East and Southeast Asia.
Tadashi Ishizuka

Tadashi Ishizuka is the Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Mitsui & Co. LNG Investment USA, Inc., the holding company that oversees Mitsui & Co., Ltd.’s natural gas purchasing, LNG sales, and investment in the Cameron LNG project in Hackberry, Louisiana. Ishizuka joined Mitsui in 1993 after graduating from Keio University with a B.A. in Economics. His start in the export/import/domestic sales of general merchandise in Asia, Middle East, Africa and South America, led to a one-year mission to establish inspection and advisory teams for multi-national mining companies in Peru.

In 2004, Ishizuka moved to a division of Mitsui specializing in new business development, where he began acquiring shares in new LNG projects in Indonesia and Equatorial Guinea. He then progressed through to an E&P subsidiary of Mitsui (Mitsui Oil Exploration Co., Ltd.) in 2006 to manage core assets in South East Asia and partnerships with International Oil Companies (IOC)/National Oil Companies (NOC).

Before moving to his current position, Ishizuka served as General Manager of the Strategic Planning Department of E&P Division of Mitsui.
Supporting Partners:

The Consulate-General of Japan in Houston
Japan Business Association of Houston
TEXOMA JET Alumni Association

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