



日本国際交流センター

JAPAN CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

US-Japan Parliamentary Exchange Program US Congressional Delegation to Japan

OCTOBER 2017

On October 28–31, 2017, two Congressional members, Representative Ami Bera and Representative Joaquin Castro, visited Tokyo for an intense two-and-a-half day program of meetings and roundtables as part of JCIE's US-Japan Parliamentary Exchange Program. This was organized in cooperation with the Japan Center for Economic Research on the occasion of its Mt. Fuji Dialogue, a high-level policy forum on US-Japan relations. The Congressional members started their visit by speaking to the conference's 180 attendees and joining side events with senior participants, and then they spent

one-and-a-half days in customized meetings with a wide range of leaders.

During their time in Japan, the group met with much of the country's top political leadership—including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Foreign Minister Taro Kono, and nearly 20 other Diet members—to discuss cooperation on security challenges and trade. They also spoke with a wide range of policy experts, business executives, and opinion leaders about potential areas for new US-Japan cooperation.



Being interviewed by the Financial Times' Demetri Sevastupulo



Rep. Bera and Rep. Castro meeting with Foreign Minister Taro Kono

DELEGATION MEMBERS

Hon. Ami Bera, Member, US House of Representatives (D-CA)

Hon. Joaquin Castro, Member, US House of Representatives (D-TX)

Mr. Danny Meza, Chief of Staff, Office of Representative Castro

Many of their discussions centered on the future of US-Japan security cooperation, and North Korea’s nuclear program featured prominently in almost every meeting. When senior Japanese legislators questioned the willingness of the United States to put its own citizens at risk to deter a nuclear attack on Japan, the Congressional members reassured them that there is a bipartisan commitment in the United States to maintain its “nuclear umbrella” and stand up for its allies. The long-term challenge of China’s growing regional power and assertiveness also came up repeatedly, and there was considerable discussion of strengthening US-Japan-India-Australia quadrilateral cooperation on maritime security as one step to stabilize the region.

In the aftermath of the Trump administration’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), US-Japan trade relations were another hot topic. A wide

range of Japanese leaders implored the Congressional members to ensure that the United States remains committed to shaping the rules of the road for economic interactions in Asia Pacific rather than ceding leadership to China. Both sides felt it was important for Japan to push forward in forging a TPP-11 deal that retains the framework of the original TPP agreement, with Japanese government officials expressing their hopes that the United States might rejoin it at a later stage. In particular, there were discussions about the need to level the playing field for businesses in the region to avoid allowing Asian state-owned enterprises to have an unfair advantage over private US and Japanese companies.

The delegation members also discussed numerous other areas of potential US-Japan cooperation, from artificial intelligence and cybersecurity to work on infrastructure. The potential for deeper bilateral



Rep. Joaquin Castro speaks at the Mt. Fuji Dialogue



Cyberdyne CEO Yoshiyuki Sankai demonstrates the HAL [Hybrid Assistive Limb] to Rep. Ami Bera



Former Defense Minister Gen Nakatani makes a point at the US-Japan Legislative Roundtable



Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage outlines US priorities in Asia

cooperation on health and aging was underscored during a site visit to Cyberdyne, where the company’s billionaire CEO demonstrated how its wearable robotic exoskeletons are helping people with neuromuscular disorders to retrain their bodies to walk again. The group also discussed the prospects for Japanese investment in high-speed rail in Texas and elsewhere with a range of Japanese legislators and business leaders. In addition, Prime Minister Abe and Representative Castro, who chairs the Congressional US-Japan Caucus, spoke about the importance of further strengthening legislative exchange between the Diet and the US Congress and how this can be a catalyst for bilateral cooperation.

Many of these discussions eventually came back to the issue of domestic politics in both countries, contrasting the dramatic changes in US politics with Japan’s surprising stability, even in the face of a snap election less than a week prior to the start of the program. Several senior Diet members voiced their concern that the United States seems less willing to lead on the global stage. While acknowledging these concerns, the Congressional members reassured them that, even though the postwar international system is at an inflection point, American values have not fundamentally changed and that US foreign policy should remain committed to global engagement for years to come.



CSIS President John Hamre, the Congressmen, and former Chief of US Naval Operations Gary Roughead



Posing with young, up-and-coming Diet members