

**Mie-Washington Business & Cultural Exchange Evening,
Featuring Iga Beef and Other Mie Delicacies**

Governor Eikei Suzuki, Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen, Senators Karen Fraser, Steve Hobbs and Bob Hasegawa, Mr. Takayoshi Iwata, Dr. Jeffrey Riedinger, Mr. Schuyler Hoss, Mie delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

三重県からお越しの皆様 三重高校準優勝おめでとうございます。
私のご挨拶は英語でさせていただきます。

Thank you all for joining us this evening. I'm particularly grateful to Lt. Governor Owen for being here tonight as a witness to the MOU signing between Washington State and Mie Prefecture. I would also thank Mr. Schuyler Hoss for his contribution to facilitating the Mie Delegation's visit, including the MOU. I also thank the delegation, in particular Governor Suzuki, for coming all the way from Japan for the second time to continue promoting good relations.

The relationship between Washington State and Japan has been deepened further in recent years. For example, the two-way trade between Washington and Japan is increasing and surpassed 14 billion dollars last year.

With such a backdrop, more and more Japanese local governments have come to show their interest in Washington State. In particular, Governor Suzuki has now visited two years in a row.

Governor Suzuki is very young and energetic. Mie Prefecture is going to conclude an MOU with Washington State, as well as with the University of Washington and South Seattle College. I hope the relationship between Washington State and Mie Prefecture will be strengthened further and win-win relations will be formed.

Tonight the Mie delegation has brought Iga Beef, a top-grade wagyu. I heard this is the first appearance of Iga Beef in the United States and I think you are all lucky to be able to try it. Please enjoy the beef, paired with fine Washington wine. I hope you will all contribute to Iga Beef's widespread introduction in the US.

Let`s all have a good time this evening. Thank you very much.