

NAGOYA RESIDENTS EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR WEST VIRGINIA'S JAPAN OFFICE

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NAGOYA - People from Nagoya's business and government communities lined up Wednesday night to have their picture taken with Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va. It was immediately apparent how much these people appreciate the fact that Rockefeller and former Gov. Gaston Caperton chose to locate West Virginia's Japan office in Nagoya instead of in Tokyo. When Caperton and Rockefeller visited Japan with 18 other West Virginians in 1989, 39 states had offices in Japan. All were in Tokyo. "We wanted to go somewhere where people made things and were hard workers," Rockefeller said to the attentive crowd of nearly 100 people. But, having an office outside of Tokyo was unthinkable. Tokyo is the country's capital, largest city and financial center. Going against the grain is discouraged in Japan. So Rockefeller checked with three former prime ministers and sought permission from two other symbolic government leaders. "It was the act of asking and then they blessed it, so to speak," he said in a pre-trip interview.

Nagoya is the heart of Japan's manufacturing. Plus, Toyota's head office is in nearby Toyota City. Both cities are in the Aichi Prefecture, which is similar to being in the same state in America. Nagoya is in central Japan, about 200 miles west of Tokyo, which is about 2 hours away by high-speed train. "I actually picked Nagoya not based so much on Toyota, but based upon the fact it had been the most bombed-out part of Japan in the Second World War. The reason it was most bombed out, was because it manufactured the most," Rockefeller said in the earlier interview. "I just in my bones felt that was a good place for West Virginia."

This year is the Nagoya office's 15th anniversary. The state has one other overseas office in Munich, Germany. "Nagoya was really thrilled and gave us free office space and all kinds of things," Rockefeller said. "It's been a very happy relationship ever since, as has been the relationship with Toyota." Aichi's vice governor and the Nagoya Chamber of Commerce and Industry's chairman repeatedly thanked Rockefeller during the evening reception for opening the office in Nagoya.

Three people work in the Nagoya office: director Ken Crockett; trade and investment manager Kazuyo Mizutani and administrative assistant Atsuko Murayama. The office receives \$342,000 a year from the state's budget. The employees identify investment prospects and possible Japanese markets for West Virginia companies and products, said Crockett, who has headed the office for 10 years. Doing business in **Japan** means developing and cultivating relationships. Crockett said he and his staff try to keep in the customers' face. "We're [part of the] public sector, but have a very private sector [type of] customer service," he said.

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