

“State-Japan ties lauded”  
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Tokyo – West Virginia delegation members mingled with about 100 of the state’s Tokyo governmental and business associates, including Dr. Shoichiro Toyoda, the honorary chairman of the Toyota Motor Corp. – during a dinner reception at U.S. Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer’s home Tuesday evening. “I feel overwhelmed to be invited this evening. At the same time, I’m extremely pleased to see Sen. Rockefeller and meet for the first time Gov. Manchin,” Toyoda told guests through an interpreter. Toyoda praised West Virginia for its hard workers and invited the guests to visit the state’s space at Expo 2005, the first world’s fair of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Toyoda is the chairman of the Japan Association for the 2005 Expo, the group that organized the event. He asked Rockefeller nearly 10 years ago to help him garner support for Japan to host the event.

The delegation is scheduled to visit the Expo’s U.S. and Toyota Pavilion on Thursday. Tuesday was Rockefeller’s first day with the West Virginia group in Japan. The state’s junior senator spent the past few days in Taiwan meeting with companies and the country’s premier and president. He also met with executives from aircraft manufacturing company Sino-Swearingen Aircraft Corp. The company has a plant in Martinsburg, WV and employs about 125 people. It has invented a six-seat commercial jet plane that flies higher than similar planes, which increases its fuel efficiency allowing it to fly further, said Patrick Robertson, deputy to Rockefeller’s chief of staff. The jet will be able to fly across the country without refueling.

The company has built seven or eight prototypes and already has 145 orders. The jet should reach the certification stage by late summer. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration will need to test the planes before the orders can be filled. Robertson said it was unclear how many jobs the contracts could bring to West Virginia, because some work could also go to Sino-Swearingen’s other United States plant in San Antonio. Rockefeller joined the delegation for breakfast and called the Japan trade mission trip a “sacred odyssey.” He said it showed that not everything happened through government

appropriations. The trip also showed West Virginians taking their destiny in their own hands, which creates a feeling that the state can do what it wants to, he said.

“People need to know how good we are and how hard we work,” he said. Nippon Thermostat Co. Ltd. President Yoshiyuki Onishi has already made that discovery, as delegation members learned during a meeting and plant tour with company executives. The company’s West Virginia facility will have its grand opening on June 27 and start producing thermostats in the fall for Toyota’s plants in Georgetown, Ky., and Putnam County. It is the latest Japanese company to invest in West Virginia. “The people are very warm,” Onishi said later in the day at the dinner reception. Onishi said he chose to open his first North American facility in West Virginia for several reasons, including Toyota’s success and the government support and educated workforce.

As Nippon Thermostat expands, it will bring more of its suppliers to West Virginia. “We’ll expand rapidly, I think,” Onishi said. “After launching production, we will have many things to ask you.” The company hopes to make specialty thermostats for Honda in the future. After the meeting, Manchin said he would like to think that the company would expand within a year or two. “We’re going to be there to support them,” he said. “they need a comfort level.”

Nippon Thermostat held 55 percent of the market for thermostats in Japan in 2004, which gave it the largest share of the market. It captured 19 percent of the world’s auto market share and aims to eventually hit 30 percent. About 670 people work for the company that makes room ventilators, thermostats for racecars and temperature control devices for automobiles. Six employees work at the Frazier’s Bottom facility now and about five or six more will start in the fall, Onishi said. Meanwhile, while some members of the delegation visited Nippon Thermostat, other listened to Rockefeller speak to members of the Keidanren, a high-ranking Japanese Chamber of Commerce, about the indispensable, integrated economic relationship between Japan and the United States. He focused on six steps the two countries could take to further strengthen their partnership:

- The countries should engage China from a position of collective strength.
- Japan must bolster its leadership role in Asia to become a larger economic player in the strategic economic and security arenas.
- The two countries should move forward on a bilateral free-trade agreement.
- The U.S. should lead efforts to have Japan become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.
- The two countries must work together to address issues that impede economic integration.
- Japan’s government should continue to learn from the great global companies like Toyota, Sony, Honda, Cannon and Mitsubishi that were created in Japan over the last century.