



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAII

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**2026 HAWAII-JAPAN SISTER SUMMIT STRENGTHENS
PARTNERSHIPS, SETS NEW COLLABORATIVE PRIORITIES**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HONOLULU – The 2026 Hawai'i–Japan Sister Summit concluded yesterday at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort, bringing together more than 350 participants – including nearly 30 governors, vice governors and mayors – from Hawai'i and Japan – for dialogue, cultural exchange and policy collaboration.

The summit, themed “Creating Our Future,” convened state and county officials, sister prefecture and sister city representatives and experts in economic development, culture, health, security and resilience. Building on the inaugural 2023 gathering, this year's summit focused on transforming long-standing sister relationships into actionable initiatives supporting economic opportunity, shared resilience and deeper cross-cultural engagement.

“Japan remains one of Hawai‘i’s most important global partners and the summit allowed us to advance practical areas of collaboration for the years ahead,” said James Kunane Tokioka, director of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT). “From economic development to resilience, education and student exchange, these discussions help shape long-term value for both Hawai‘i and Japan.”

Reyna Kaneko, president of the Japan-America Society of Hawai‘i (JASH), emphasized the importance of these connections. “Our sister ties foster trust and mutual understanding and this summit helps turn those relationships into meaningful action,” she said.

The program opened with a keynote from New York-based Japan Society President and CEO Joshua W. Walker, Ph.D., who outlined the strategic, economic and cultural importance of the Hawai‘i–Japan relationship. Breakout sessions covered topics including One Health, sustainability, Hawai‘i–Japan economic impacts, disaster preparedness, sports diplomacy and emerging creative and pop culture industries.

Speakers included Hawai‘i Governor Josh Green, Fukuoka Governor Seitaro Hattori and senior representatives from Japan Airlines, the American Red Cross and the National Institute for Defense Studies, along with leaders in the sports, gaming and creative sectors.

An invitation-only Hawai‘i–Japan Economic Policy Forum convened today at the East-West Center, focusing on trade, investment and the role of government and sister relationships in strengthening long-term economic partnership.

B-Roll, interview clips and photos:

Video footage, interviews and photos from the event are available for media use [here](#):

- Opening remarks by Governor Green, the Okayama Prefecture sister-state signing, keynote address, panel sessions and interviews with:
 - Joshua W. Walker, Ph. D., Hawai‘i-Japan Sister Summit keynote speaker
 - Reyna Kaneko, JASH president
 - Dennis Ling, DBEDT Business Development and Support Division administrator

About the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT)

DBEDT is Hawai‘i’s resource center for economic and statistical data, business development opportunities, energy and conservation information, as well as foreign trade advantages. The DBEDT mission is to achieve a Hawai‘i economy that embraces innovation and is globally competitive, dynamic and productive, providing opportunities for all Hawai‘i’s citizens. Through its attached agencies, the department fosters planned community development, creates affordable workforce housing units in high-quality living environments and promotes innovation sector job growth.

About the Business Development and Support Division (BDS)

The Business Development and Support Division of DBEDT promotes industry development and economic diversification by supporting existing and emerging industries in Hawai'i and by attracting new investment and businesses to the state. Learn more at: <https://invest.hawaii.gov/>.

About the Japan America Society of Hawai'i (JASH)

The Japan-America Society of Hawai'i was founded in 1976 to promote understanding and friendship between the people of Japan and the United States through the special and unique perspective of Hawai'i.

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