

## National Security and Politics

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### Adrienne Vanek

Accepting the Mike Mansfield Fellowship after my senator announced his decision to retire was truly an exciting, proud moment, to be sure, however, I was filled with a certain amount of underlying anxiety as I made yet another mental note that I had no return rights. In other words, I would have no job to return to—and in an election year no less—after the Fellowship.

Luckily, my being able to go to Japan through the esteemed Mansfield Foundation as a Mansfield Fellow more than outweighed any anxieties. And, having served as one of then-Chairman Phil Gramm's international trade/economy committee staff members handling trade-related portfolio items, my Fellowship proposal mainly focused on Japanese government formulation and implementation of trade policies. Additionally, as I desired to learn more about the Diet, its role in trade policy formulation, interaction with other Japanese government ministries, and fundamental differences with the U.S. Congress, I undertook a rotation with Senior Diet Member Etoh Seishiro (nicknamed Daigishi) in addition to those with the MOF (Ministry of Finance) and METI (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry).

Because trade policy formulation in the Japanese government is coordinated by a multitude of agencies and the Diet, my rotation with Daigishi—who then sat on the LDP's (Liberal Democratic Party) trade policy coordination committee—was especially conducive to achieving my Fellowship objectives. During my Fellowship year in Japan, several critical trade policy issues were at the front of Japan's trade debate: the Japan-Mexico FTA (Free Trade Agreement) negotiations were underway and policymakers were beginning to put feelers out for an expanded ASEAN FTA including Japan, the Republic of Korea and China. Attending meetings and FTA negotiations, reviewing reports, and conducting interviews and research, I gained unique insight into specific FTA-related issues and concerns (e.g. unfettered labor mobility, standards of quality, agricultural goods barriers, etc.) across the major trade policy-related ministries, the Diet, and other key stakeholders.

One interesting observation relates to LDP headquarters trade policy coordination committee meetings that I had never been allowed to attend previously while at MOF—that is, until I moved over to Daigishi's office and suddenly found myself

in the elevator with my former MOF Director, who was set to appear before the committee to discuss pending FTA concerns and trade issues. My Diet rotation proved to be one of the most productive, insightful professional experiences of my Fellowship, enabling me to better grasp agency-Diet conflicts and relationships, and better understand those differences and similarities with our own political system. Furthermore, I was able to travel with Daigishi and his lovely wife to various meetings with constituents and tour Oita Prefecture—after all, someone from the Foundation needed to thoroughly inspect Oita’s world-renowned *onsens* to ensure quality and sanitation levels were up to Japan’s strict codes and practices!

These personal and professional relationships with Daigishi and his staff and several METI colleagues continue to be strong even today, nearly nine years later. During my travels to Japan working for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and having lived in Tokyo working for Apple Japan, I’ve been fortunate to visit with my former Japanese colleagues and friends. As is the case for most of the Fellows, one becomes so attached to certain offices and certain people that it’s only natural to become lifelong friends.

Going into the Fellowship Program, I had heard that the contacts and insights gained would put me in good stead regardless of whatever career path I followed upon my return. I have consistently—and pleasantly—found that my Mansfield Fellowship-acquired skills, experience, insight and networks continue to provide competitive advantages in many respects. For example, in my new position as Global Senior Director with AB-InBev, we work closely with the Japan Brewers Association on global alcohol policy issues. During recent industry meetings in Amsterdam, knowing that I was the only Japanese-speaker and had Japan experience, my presence was adamantly requested at the table where our Japanese beer industry colleagues were sitting. Needless to say, we immediately established a bond that was further enhanced as one gentleman was very good friends with Daigishi and his staff, having just attended his book signing the week prior. And, yes, we toasted to Daigishi over a beer!

The reputation of the Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program is second-to-none—so much so, that both the private and public sectors in both countries recognize the unique attributes and skill sets that Mansfield Fellows bring to any organization. Attributes such as open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, flexibility, problem-solving, people and language skills, humbleness, negotiating and analytical skills, and intellectual curiosity all come to mind when I think of my fellow Fellows and the Mansfield Foundation staff in respect and admiration. For the friendships, experiences, and numerous challenges gained during my time with the Mansfield Fellowship, I am

extremely lucky and grateful for having been given the opportunity to join a wonderful organization dedicated to strengthening U.S.-Japan relations at a crucial time in our bilateral relationship.

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**Adrienne Vanek** participated in the Mike Mansfield Fellowship Program as a representative of the U.S. Senate from 2002–2004. During her Fellowship year in Japan, she served in full-time placements in Japan’s Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. She also completed a placement in the office of the Honorable Seishiro Eto, LDP Member, House of Councillors. She currently is global senior director, Anheuser-Bush InBev.