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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Almost a year ago, I had the great honor and pleasure to be the first American President in office to visit Japan. My trip convinced me more than ever that we Americans can learn much from Japan's culture which will enrich the quality of our lives.

One week ago the Emperor and Empress of Japan completed a visit to the United States, the first such visit in history.

This exchange of State visits not only symbolizes the importance of our relations but also the value of the exchange of people and ideas between the two countries.

Several years ago, the Government of Japan established a Foundation to expand understanding of Japan among universities and other institutions in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Through the Foundation, the Government of Japan made a generous gift to ten American universities to strengthen the study of Japanese history and culture. And this year, the Government of Japan announced the gift of an Experimental Theater to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, as a Bicentennial present to the people of the United States.

Now it is our turn. The people of America genuinely desire to build closer relations with the people of Japan. This requires that we understand each other's arts, society and history more widely and more deeply.

It was my pleasure to sign into law an Act which will effectively further this important goal. Through the distinguished leadership of Senator Jacob Javits and Congressman Wayne Hays and many others in both Houses, the Japan-United States Friendship Act is now the law of the land.

The Act provides for the creation of a Japan-United States Friendship Commission to administer a program of expanded scholarly, cultural, and artistic ventures between our two countries. The Commission will be composed of the 12 members of the United States Panel of the Joint Committee on United States-Japan Cultural and Educational Cooperation; the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts; the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities; two members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker; and two members of the Senate to be appointed by the President pro tempore.

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Because of the Constitutional provision against Members of the Congress serving in any other office of the United States, the Congressional Members of the Commission will serve in an advisory capacity, as non-voting members.

I am confident that the support made available under the Act for expanded cultural relations will contribute importantly to the strengthening of understanding between the people of the United States and the people of Japan.

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