

Illinois REALTORS® shows members' expertise in global real estate

More than two years of efforts by Illinois REALTORS® to position its members as experts in cross-border transactions yielded results in September, as the association was invited by top Illinois economic development officials on a trade mission to Japan.

The trip was part of the annual meetings of the Japan-Midwest U.S. Association, and brought together government officials from 10 Midwestern states. The Illinois delegation was headed by Gov. Bruce Rauner, and the gathering featured several days of discussions with representatives from many of the 630 Japanese firms which do business in the state.

How did Illinois REALTORS® score this coveted chance to sell the expertise of its members? In 2015 the association began an aggressive program to raise awareness of the impact global business has on Illinois REALTORS®' businesses. We did this by:

- **Illinois REALTORS® created a unique Consulate General Liaison Program which pairs members with our many Chicago-based foreign delegations.** The liaisons meet regularly with consulate officials, serving as both a source of information on the real estate market *and* as a conduit for questions these delegations might have pertaining to their country's interests in Illinois.
- **The association began participation in the annual MIPIM conference.** At the 2017 MIPIM conference, the association invited the head of the state's public-private economic development partnership to attend with our members. This trip forged greater understanding of the role REALTORS® play in the state's economy, and stressed how we could be counted on as a resource for efforts to lure foreign business to the state.

This combination of efforts resulted in the invitation for Illinois REALTORS® President Doug Carpenter, association CEO Gary Clayton and one of our Consulate General Liaisons, REALTOR® Ayumi Deloney, to attend the trade mission on behalf of the state's Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Deloney, who was born in Japan, was able to put her skills as an ambassador for REALTORS® to work as she translated and arranged meetings with high-ranking Japanese business officials.

The association had a prominent role in the meetings and hosted a reception for the dignitaries involved. Carpenter introduced Gov. Rauner, who has made it his mission over the past three years to promote Illinois as a place for foreign companies to do business. The meeting of the Japan-Midwest Association is important because the Japanese companies operating in Illinois are responsible for nearly 45,000 jobs.

What's clear from this experience is that the REALTOR® brand is seen to stand for authoritative, insightful guidance on the real estate economy. It also underscores how efforts in Illinois really do have an impact well beyond the state's borders.