

TAIGA ISHIKAWA

b. 1974

JAPANESE POLITICIAN

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A native of Sugamo, Ishikawa graduated from Meiji Gakuin University School of Law. He came out at age 28 in his autobiography, “Where Is My Boyfriend?” (2002). Since then, he has actively supported LGBT rights, including same-sex marriage and workplace protections. He has appeared on various television programs and participated in the Tokyo Pride Parade. In 2004 Ishikawa founded a nonprofit organization, Peer Friends, that hosts events for gay men in Japanese cities.

In 2011, after serving as the secretary to Social Democratic Party (SDP) Leader Mizuho Fukushima, Ishikawa was elected to a seat on Tokyo’s Toshima Ward

Assembly. After his historic win, Ishikawa said, “I hope this news will give hope to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who still feel isolated from the society.”

Two years later, Ishikawa ran for chairman of the SDP. He was the first openly gay candidate to run for parliamentary party leadership in Japanese history. Although he lost the bid, he was applauded again for breaking barriers. He became one of the most famous gay men in Japan. The Japan Times hailed him as a potentially “valuable asset” to the party who could help “channel the voices of marginalized people.”

In office Ishikawa successfully lobbied for the right of Japanese citizens to marry foreign nationals of the same sex in countries where same-sex marriage is legal. He also campaigned for creation of a domestic partnership registry that managed housing and hospital visitation rights on the municipal level. In 2016 he opposed an anti-LGBT legislator, saying that same-sex marriage and other rights are important in ending discrimination in Japanese society.

Although homosexuality is not criminalized in Japan, people in the LGBT community face open discrimination. “In Japan, gay people instantly know they shouldn’t tell anyone about their sexuality,” Ishikawa said. “Coming out as a gay is not easy in Japan yet.”



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