

"My Three Reasons" by Kazumi Saeki, a member of Saitama City Council

There are three reasons why I decided to run for Saitama City Council.

1. The Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field (in May, 2018), the so-called Law Parite*, has been enacted.

*Parite means "equal" in French.

2. I want to be a person who would listen to the citizens' voices.

3. After reflecting on myself, I realized I should act now to change society.

First of all, in May 2018, a law called the Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field was enacted. It is also called the Equal Candidacy Act, and it says that half of the candidates in elections should be women, although, it is not a mandatory requirement (there is no penalty). Since this bipartisan law was passed, those who had been involved in pushing for the law wanted to include more and more women in the race.

Ms. Kameda who used to be an instructor at the National Women's Education Center (NVEC) was on the sidelines of the Diet meeting where the bill of Parite was being discussed and was eventually passed. Afterwards, Ms. Kameda told me regretfully that she didn't seem to have any female candidates, even though the law was established. Now, I've always been the type of person who says "yes, I'll do it" in a chaotic situation; for example, deciding on PTA board members and nobody wanting to take the role. So, her comment roused me to action and I decided to say "yes".

Secondly, when I was working for NVEC, which is a government agency, I was on the side of informing people of the government's policies. However, I always thought that those policies weren't in line with the people's real feelings

and common sense, and I began to feel that something was wrong. So, I decided to switch sides so that I could deliver the citizens' voice, instead of passing on the government's.

Thirdly, I wanted to be a person who helps to create a better society. I was leading a career development seminar at NVEC where I was involved in a project called "Career Development Seminar" for female university students. I then realized that I hadn't taken any action to change society, while trying to provide others such opportunities. So, I myself wanted to be a person to take action.

I was already 60 years old at the time. Age 60 is called "Kanreki", meaning "a full circle of the calendar" in Japan. I wondered why I was running for a city council at 60. I decided that I would rather do it before I died.

When I was campaigning, a woman in her 40s asked me with curiosity why I decided to do it at the age of 60. Usually a 60-year-old person's only decision is whether to go to a sports club or not, right? Well done me! I would be happy to know that I inspired people that it is possible to challenge yourself even at 60.

My ideal society is that all 1.3 million people (the population of Saitama City), no matter who they are, young and old, men and women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people and minority groups, can participate in politics by using their strengths. That is what I want to aim for.