
Sister Cities International Responds to Riverside, California-Can Tho, Vietnam Sister City Partnership

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On January 16, 2015, Riverside, California and Can Tho, Vietnam signed a new agreement recognizing the two communities as sister cities. The Riverside-Can Tho partnership is the most recent of nine U.S.-Vietnam sister city partnerships in the Sister Cities International network.

In light of the recent protests surrounding the signing of this new partnership, Sister Cities International would like to reiterate that sister cities are not, nor have they ever been, an explicit or implicit endorsement of policies, laws, or actions of the partner government. Rather, they help maintain channels of communication, even when political or cultural differences threaten to sever ties between two communities. Partnerships such as these have helped foster peace and understanding through grassroots connections between communities. Sister cities are not established despite differences between two communities, but often because of them.

In 1956, when President Eisenhower started the sister cities movement just a decade after WWII, his vision was to create bonds between people from different cities around the world. By forming these relationships, he reasoned that people of different cultures could celebrate and appreciate their differences and build partnerships that would lessen the chance of new conflicts.

Sister Cities International Vice Chairman Stephen T. “Tim” Quigley adds, “President Eisenhower believed the only way to truly achieve world peace was to go beyond national governments and engage through people to people connections. As Vice Chair of Sister Cities International and as a U.S. Vietnam Combat Veteran, I agree with his vision. My life and that of my service colleagues has been deeply enriched by the culture and friendships I forged in my experience in Vietnam, despite the circumstances.”

The relationship between Riverside and Can Tho follows a long and rich tradition of U.S. citizens taking the initiative in repairing relations with former adversaries. One need only look at Germany (with 108 sister city partnerships) or Japan (with 185 sister city partnerships) to see how regular people-to-people exchanges can change international relations. We urge municipal officials and individual citizens to maintain community-level ties as a way to constructively communicate and help heal wounds.

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About Sister Cities International

Founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, Sister Cities International serves as the national membership organization for over 525 individual sister cities, counties, and states across the United States with relationships in over 2,000 communities in 140 countries. This sister city network unites tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers who work tirelessly to promote peace and understanding through programs and projects focusing on arts and culture, youth and education, economic and sustainable development, and humanitarian assistance.

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