

# Absentee Lawmaker Expelled from Japan's Diet



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News from Japanese politics: the upper house has kicked a YouTuber turned lawmaker out from the diet. The reason, he did not attend a single day of parliament sessions since being elected last July.

The upper house voted 235 to 1 to expel Higashitani Yoshikazu on Wednesday. The lawmaker is widely known for his gossip focused YouTube channel and goes by the name GaaSyy.

I'm here to announce the punishment. Mr. GaaSyy is expelled.

An expulsion is the most serious punishment the diet can hand down to lawmakers. The last time it happened was in 1951.

GaaSyy won more than 287,000 votes and was elected to the upper house for the first-time last July. He told supporters that he would shake up the political establishment.

This is the starting point. Everyone watch me. I'm going to wake up all the diet members who are sleeping during sessions.

GaaSyy is believed to be living in the United Arab Emirates. He repeatedly called for deliberations to be held online. He claimed he could not attend sessions in person because he could face unfair criminal charges if he returned to Japan. Last week the chamber demanded he fly to Tokyo to apologize as punishment. He did not show up.

I'm not returning to Japan. It's too early to go back now.

GaaSyy has so far been paid about 150,000 US dollars as a diet member. The total includes his monthly salary and an end of the year allowance, the equivalent of a bonus. But now he's been stripped of lawmaker status and his salary and other expenses for this month will be adjusted to a per day basis. The upper house says it will demand GaaSyy return about 5,000 dollars from money already paid for March. The chamber will also not award GaaSyy a badge usually given to ex-lawmakers. It gives the holder the right to enter the diet and observe committee sessions. The upper house decided that since he didn't show up a single time while serving as a lawmaker, it was unlikely that he would start now. A leader of the political party GaaSyy belongs to criticized the decision.

He has great communication skills, so we really needed him in the diet. I feel sorry that this happened. We will continue working with him in any way we can.

But lawmakers of other parties were unified in saying expulsion was the appropriate move.

The chamber gave him an opportunity to apologize, but he continued to ignore it. His actions are very regrettable.

This expulsion is a matter of course. I really hope the diet will not be forced to make similar decisions with others in the future.

GaaSyy is the third lawmaker to be removed under Japan's postwar constitution, but he's the first to be removed for failing to attend sessions.

Source: (NHK World News)

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. What is your opinion of GaaSyy?
2. What are the pros and cons of GaaSyy's actions?
3. How do you think GaaSyy was elected?
4. What do you think of GaaSyy's punishment?
5. Can you think of any ways to improve the future of Japanese politics?