

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

Remarks With Prime Minister Micheál Martin of Ireland at the Congressional Friends of Ireland Luncheon

March 12, 2025

Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Michael Johnson. Well, we hope you all enjoyed your meals.

We will get the program going again. We have some of the busiest people in the world in the room, so we want to be a good steward of your time.

I mentioned earlier that Irish Americans have left an indelible mark on American history, and I had a few facts I wanted to share with you this afternoon to have you consider these.

Irish men and women have taken up arms among American soldiers, they've made unmatched contributions to music and literature and the arts, and they punch well above their weight in American government.

Many Irish nationals played an essential role during the American Revolution. John Barry, for example, was an Irishman who received the first commission issued by the Continental Congress and is considered the father of our American Navy. He later became the first Navy captain to seize a British ship.

We had three Irishmen who signed our Declaration of Independence: George Taylor, Matthew Thornton, and James Smith.

One of the most recognized houses in the world was designed by James Hoban, an Irishman from County Kilkenny, when he designed our White House.

And 23 of the 45 men who have served as United States President have Irish heritage—many of them proudly—and same for hundreds of Congressmen and Senators who have walked these hallowed halls.

Today we celebrate their contributions and the truly special relationship among the United States and Ireland and the Irish people.

So join me in a toast. Here I am again without a glass. *[Laughter]* I'm supposed to be toasting. I'm going to grab

one.

Audience member. There you are, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Johnson. Thank you. A glass of water, no less.

Audience member. It works as well.

Speaker Johnson. It works as well. *[Laughter]*

And the toast is in—hold on. Man, I am really messing this up, but we're all friends here. And I don't know where it went.

All right, I'm just going to toast. *[Laughter]* It was a beautiful toast. Trust me, it was great. *[Laughter]*

To the United States, to Ireland, to this beautiful relationship, and to all who aspire to be Irish around the world. Cheers.

[*At this point, Speaker Johnson offered a toast.*]

Audience members. Cheers!

Audience member. *Sláinte.*

Speaker Johnson. *Sláinte.* That's right. That's what I'm supposed to say.

I have the pleasure of introducing our own head of state here.

This luncheon offers an opportunity for both Americans and the Irish to reflect on our past and on our future.

In 1981, Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator Daniel Moynihan and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill started this great tradition, the Congressional Friends of Ireland. They aimed to celebrate their shared Irish heritage, deepen ties between our two nations and promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

In 1983, the Friends of Ireland Luncheon was born when President Ronald Reagan—of course, of proud Irish heritage—and the Taoiseach visited Capitol Hill to celebrate Irish heritage and St. Patrick's Day.

This lunch was the embodiment of that, of charity and friendship across political differences, and it has led the real-world—led to real-world international diplomatic successes. Many historians credit the advocacy of the Friends of Ireland Caucus as essential in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and we welcome continued efforts to promote and preserve this agreement and promises of a bright future for the Friends of Ireland.

Last year, I hosted this luncheon alongside President Biden. Our political differences were on stark display. It was obvious. That's an understatement. But he was our incumbent Democratic President and I was the Republican House Speaker. And still, we shared laughs at the table at this event. It was one of the rare moments of the year where we could do that. That's what this—this celebration is all about. We laid down our swords, and in the spirit of Tip O' Neill and Ronald Reagan, we broke bread together and celebrated what binds us all together, rather than what divides us.

This year is a little different, of course. The political dynamics on Capitol Hill are extraordinarily different. President Trump is back in the White House. Republicans control both Chambers of Congress. Here, in our form of government, we call that "unified government." A year ago, people thought it was crazy for predicting that we would be here today, but we are.

And we're facing a new dawn for America and our bilateral relationships, and I know that we can look forward to working together to promote and preserve our friendships. It's an important, informative time around the world to do that.

So, in keeping with the proud U.S.-Ireland tradition and the spirit of the Friends of Ireland Luncheon, it is my great privilege to present the 45th and 47th President of the United States, Donald J. Trump.

President Trump. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, everybody. It's a great honor.

I've been here just about every time. We had one that was terminated because of a thing called COVID. I don't know if anybody's heard of that, but that was never pleasant. And we would have been together twice, but we had—COVID interrupted twice.

And I appreciate seeing you again, however, and you've done a fantastic job. We very much appreciate you being here.

And I also want to thank my new friends from Northern Ireland for being here, who I just met. Thank you very much. Great honor. Great honor. And I must say, they spoke very well of you. So that's good. That's good. And great to be with you.

And thank you to Speaker Johnson, and thank you to all of the Members of Congress who are here—quite a few—most of which are Irish—most of whom are Irish.

And we welcome Taoiseach. And I love the name because—Micheál, but it's Michael. I said, "How many people call you Michael?" It's exactly Michael. I said—he said, "About 50 percent." I said, "Do you get upset when they do?" He said, "No," but I'm going to call you Micheál, because that's the way it is—Martin, who has really been terrific. I've been with him quite a bit. I've spoken to him quite a bit, and we're going to have no problems. And his wife Mary, we welcome you to America. Fantastic people. And it's really a wonderful annual tradition being here.

We're also grateful to be joined by Irish Ambassador to the United States Geraldine Byrne Nason. Where's Geraldine? Hi, Geraldine. Thank you very much. And the entire Irish delegation.

And I know we're a little bit—everybody's a little bit late today, but that's okay, because we're celebrating the Irish, and I think it's okay we're a little bit late.

I also want to congratulate a friend of mine, Ed Walsh. He's a great golfer. He's a championship golfer, actually—not quite as good as Rory, but that's okay. But he's right—he's right up there. He's won—he's won many, many club championships—many club championships—and he's one of the best golfers you'll ever see.

And congratulations. Boy, you're going to have fun over there. He's going to be the Ambassador to Ireland. So congratulations—

U.S. Ambassador to Ireland—designate Edward Walsh. Thanks to you!

President Trump. —Ed. Well, maybe it is, thanks to me, but you're going to have a good time. You're going to represent us well. He can do most of his business on the golf course too. [*Laughter*] That's a nice—he's got the best job of anybody.

And I really appreciate so many of my friends being here. So many great friends are here.

This afternoon we're gathered to celebrate the deep and abiding ties of history, family, and friendship that bind together Ireland and the United States of America. The Irish American patriots have been part of our national history in our country's earliest days. Amazing history they have with our country.

Irish Americans fought heroically in our war for independence, served with honor in the crucible of the Civil War, and won fame and valor among Theodore Roosevelt's famous Rough Riders. They were rough riders.

By some estimates, more than 2,000 Irish American warriors have earned the congressional Medal of Honor. This is an amazing statistic, because who would ever think that's even possible? It's more than 50 percent of the Medals of Honor were won by the Irish.

I'm going to have to check that. [*Laughter*] That sounds like—that's like—that's an awfully good statistic. We're going to have to check what's going on over there, huh? But that's an amazing statistic, actually—50 percent.

This includes the great Audie Murphy, the most decorated enlisted soldier in American history, whose service in the Second World War earned a Medal of Honor, two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, three Purple Hearts, and the Legion of Merit. Quite a person. Became a movie actor—the movie actor stuff wasn't quite as good as the soldier that he did, but he was great. Became a very famous person, actually.

America has truly been blessed by the courage and unstoppable spirit of the Irish.

Over the generations, Americans of Irish ancestry have helped build our railroads and raise our cities and man our factories, enrich our culture with art and music and literature—we see that all over—and protect our communities by joining the proud tradition of Irish American police officers and firefighters. And few have done more for the Stars and Stripes than the sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle.

And I can tell you, I know your father was a great boxer, and they have a lot of good fighters. I know so many Irish fighters. They like to fight, and they're damn good at it too.

But your father—his father was a great fighter, actually. So that means genetically, I'm not going to mess around with you. You understand. [*Laughter*] I'm—I'm a believer in that.

But as you know, on Monday, millions of Americans will celebrate St. Patrick's Day. We love St. Patrick's Day, maybe especially in New York. Hundreds of thousands of citizens decked in Irish green will parade through the streets of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and, of course, New York—a site that I've witnessed many, many times. In Manhattan, the people will stream up Fifth Avenue and march past the magnificent—I see it so much, and I love it, especially when you're looking down upon St. Patrick's Cathedral, because it's, to me, one of the most beautiful cathedrals of the world. And it's a monument not only to God but also to the patron saint of Ireland—patron saint.

It's really an extraordinary testament to the connection between our two countries that after more than 1,500 years, the shining legacy of St. Patrick still rouses city blocks half the world away—think of that—and fills our people with incredible love and pride.

We have a lot of pride in that cathedral. That cathedral is something, to me, so beautiful. I think maybe my favorite. They have larger, you know. It's very large, but they have larger. But I think it's truly one of the most beautiful.

The Irish spirit is truly alive and thriving in America. And as we see today, the friendship between our nations is strong and it's really unbreakable, and that includes all of you. You know, it's all of you. We love you all.

So, Taoiseach, I want to just thank you once again for being here. It's an honor. And hopefully, we're going to be doing this at least three more times. Okay? We're going to be doing this three more times, at least. And when I say "at least," they go absolutely crazy. [*Laughter*]

So thank you very much for being here. Mary, thank you very much for being here. It's a great honor. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

Speaker Johnson. Thank you, Mr. President.

Our next guest is not a stranger to this event; however, this is actually the first time we have the privilege of welcoming the taoiseach, Micheál Martin. I said that right. We were talking about that. So I'm Michael too, but that's how we say it very plainly and boringly in the U.S. And it's the same name. Over there it's Micheál. I like it a lot better.

But we're welcoming him to the Friends of Ireland luncheon in person as the new taoiseach.

And this is interesting, because in 2021, it was mentioned earlier, this luncheon was virtual due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. And in 2022, the Taoiseach was in town and slated to attend, but he had a positive COVID diagnosis himself, and it forced him to deliver remarks virtually once again.

So, now, finally—finally—we welcome him in person to this great event, and we're so excited to have you in the Capitol, my friend.

I'll welcome you to the podium now: the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin.

Prime Minister Martin. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Chairmen Kelly and Neal, Senators, Representatives, ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you all for welcoming me and Mary to Washington, DC, to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

And it is a good feeling to be COVID-free and to be here—[*laughter*—]—on that day.

But may I, in particular, say I'm pleased also to be joined with the Deputy First Minister from Northern Ireland, Emma Little-Pengelly. Very pleased to have you here, Emma, as well.

This is a cherished opportunity to break bread with our most steadfast friends. And as has been said, it's now more than 40 years since Speaker Tip O'Neill invited President Ronald Reagan to the Capitol for the first St. Patrick's Day lunch, and thus began a very proud tradition, which I am honored to continue today in your esteemed company.

President Trump, thank you for joining us today to mark our national day. You are a great friend of Ireland. And by the way, all those statistics that you quoted are absolutely, verifiably true. [*Laughter*] Okay?

I also know, President, that there's one small corner in the west of Ireland, a beautiful and remote part called Doonbeg in County Clare, which holds a very special place in your heart, and we hope to welcome you back to our small island and, indeed, to these particular greens very soon.

Speaker Johnson, once again, you have graciously gathered our dear friends in this august house to mark St. Patrick's Day. You too are a true friend of our nation. We thank you for your hospitality in what is a very busy week for you.

For centuries now, America has been a place of welcome and opportunity for Irish people. Our nation's green has been threaded through the rich tapestry of the United States by almost 32 million Irish Americans.

Their forebears left a very different Ireland to the one we know today. Many were fleeing the grinding poverty and terrible hunger, which blighted Ireland in centuries past. They left in desperation, but also in determination to forge a brighter future for their children.

They channeled that commitment into building stronger communities and, ultimately, a stronger nation, this great nation. Many of their descendants are with us today, true friends of Ireland, who continue to work tirelessly for a future of peace and prosperity on our island.

Indeed, we need look no further than the cochairs of Ireland—of the Friends of Ireland Caucus. Our dear friends Congressman Neal and Congressman Kelly's bold leadership and vision unites Irish American Members from both sides of the aisle through the Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus.

Throughout our troubles, the Friends of Ireland, Republican and Democrat alike, held fast to a vision of Ireland not marred by violence or terror. You worked unrelentingly to realize that fragile hope. You stood shoulder to shoulder with us no matter how fierce the challenge, and there were many such challenges.

And it is that same determination that together we must devote today to today's conflicts in the Ukraine and in the Middle East. And our shared history teaches us that peace, however elusive it may sometimes seem, is achievable. Its promise remains within our grasp.

Mr. President, we are forever grateful for the United States contribution to transforming our island, and we wish you well in the efforts that you are making to bring peace to the Ukraine and to the Middle East and further afield. We thank you for your leadership and indeed your ongoing friendship to Ireland. Thank you once again for joining us today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your gracious hospitality. And thank you to our dearest friends in this room. A very happy St. Patrick's Day to you all. As we might say in Gaelic——

[Prime Minister spoke in Irish; no translation was provided.]

Thank you very much indeed.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:55 p.m. in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on March 13.

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