

stand with you, as you seek a door that would open and give all of Ireland access to the hope of peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day *March 17, 1994*

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Saint Patrick's Day 1994. On this feast of the patron Saint of Ireland, we reflect on Saint Patrick's bravery and determination in delivering to the Irish people his message of faith and hope for the future—a spirit passed down through the many generations that followed.

With tremendous courage and strength of belief, Saint Patrick helped his native Ireland usher in a new era. Before Patrick returned to his island home as a Christian convert and missionary, Ireland was the last bastion of Celtic Europe. He encouraged the Irish people to adapt their ancient culture and deep spirituality to the new faith that had already transformed much of Europe. By bringing Christianity to Ireland, Saint Patrick heralded a new Eire and

prepared his people to embrace the changing world around them.

In celebrating Saint Patrick's Day, our nation not only remembers the apostle of Ireland for his achievements, but we also honor the many contributions that Irish Americans have made to their adopted homeland. As inheritors of Saint Patrick's legacy, Irish Americans have strengthened the United States with the richness of their unique history. Blessed with educators and business people, political leaders and people of faith, our nation owes a debt of gratitude to this thriving community from the Emerald Isle.

As Americans everywhere gather to celebrate our "Irishness," I extend best wishes to all for a wonderful St. Patrick's Day.

BILL CLINTON

Statement on Signing Legislation on Highway Bridge Seismic Retrofitting *March 17, 1994*

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1789—a bill that responds to January's earthquake in Southern California and will help States reduce potential losses from future earthquakes. This legislation expands the eligible uses of Federal bridge replacement and rehabilitation funds to include seismic retrofitting of highway bridges, regardless of whether the bridges are in need of other repairs or work. S. 1789 will greatly assist States in their efforts to reinforce bridges to better withstand earthquakes.

The California earthquake crippled much of the regional transportation system, serving as a sharp reminder of the vulnerability of our infrastructure to natural disasters and of the need to increase our preparedness for such events. The damage to the transportation network in

Southern California had far reaching consequences. People's everyday lives were changed because of the difficulty of travel in the region, most notably in the time and effort spent getting to work. All levels of government immediately pulled together to minimize the disruption and resulting economic losses. That effort is continuing.

In my visits to the earthquake-damaged areas with members of my Cabinet and the Congress, one question was repeatedly raised: "We cannot prevent another earthquake, but can we prevent any of the resulting loss of life and debilitating infrastructure damage?" With regard to much of the damage to bridges and overpasses, the answer to that question is "yes." The California earthquake proved that seismic retrofitting