

than separates us, and that the contest between Democrats and Republicans is much less important than the contest to make America what it can be.

I know that sometimes people may get frustrated and think, “You know what, Obama is being too nice and we need to get in there and take it to them.” [Laughter] And there will be times where that’s important. But I also think it’s important for us not to lose that spirit that animated us early on, which was to say that we don’t want to just fight the same old battles over and over again. It’s important for us to make sure that we are actually doing the work

of changing our politics even as we are changing our policies.

And that’s tough. It makes our job a little bit harder sometimes. But I think it’s absolutely important if we’re going to achieve our goals.

So thank you, everybody. God bless you. I’m proud of you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park hotel. In his remarks, he referred to White House Senior Adviser David A. Plouffe, who introduced the President; and White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations James A. Messina.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland March 17, 2011

President Obama. Hello, everybody. It is my great pleasure on St. Patrick’s Day to welcome the new Taoiseach, Prime Minister Kenny. We are thrilled to have him here. And we want to congratulate him on his historic victory.

We obviously have the strongest possible relationship with Ireland. The warmth, the affection, the familial and person-to-person contacts between our two countries extend far beyond any dry policy issues. There is just an incredible bond between our two countries. And that’s one that we want to reaffirm here today.

We have had an excellent conversation about how Ireland is going to be bouncing back from the severe economic challenges that it’s experienced over the last several years. The Taoiseach shared with me his plans and his efforts to make sure that people are put back to work in Ireland, that the financial system is stabilized. And he exudes great confidence, and I’m sure that we will be cooperating very closely with him and providing any assistance that we can on the economic front.

In addition, Ireland obviously plays an important role in the world. We want to thank him for the operations at Shannon that are so vital for us moving our troops into Afghanistan. It is a testimony to Ireland’s friendship to us. In addition, Ireland actually has trainers in Afghanistan that have provided us great assistance. And I expressed my appreciation for

those sacrifices. We’ve worked together on issues like international food security, and we will continue to work on those issues as well.

We remarked on the fact that the situation in Northern Ireland has proven to be stable, and we are going to continue to pursue all the progress that’s been made there.

So overall, the state of the relationship between our two countries is extraordinarily strong. This is a wonderful tradition, each St. Patrick’s Day, for me to be able to once again reaffirm the great warmth and affection that we have towards the people of Ireland.

And finally, I wanted to say today that I intend to come to Ireland in May, and I’m expecting to go not only to all the famous sites, but also to go to Moneygall, where my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather hails from. Joe Biden is envious because he wants to go first—[laughter]—but my expectation is, is that I’ll just be laying the groundwork for what I’m sure will be an even more wonderful trip by him.

But I’m very much looking forward to that. And thank you so much for being here today. Thank you.

Prime Minister Kenny. Well, could I just say that it’s an honor and a privilege for me to be here as the Taoiseach of Ireland, together with my wife Fionnuala, representing the Irish peo-

ple in the White House, and to meet President Obama and later his wife Michelle as well.

My message to the American people is that the new Government, which I lead, which has the strongest mandate in the history of the state, will continue to build on the very strong traditional links that we've had with the United States, in business and in politics and in culture and the arts and so on.

And Ireland is open for business and we continue to be open for business to the United States. We appreciate the investment of so much foreign direct investment from the U.S. to our country. But unlike previous centuries, we come bearing gifts as well. There are many Irish companies now operating in the U.S., with at least 80,000 American jobs created out of Irish firms here.

So from that point of view, Ireland will continue to be a very strong and loyal friend of the United States, and we will work with the authorities and the political process to the benefit of both countries.

I've explained to the President what our program is for our new government, how that's been accepted in terms of its fiscal element by the IMF, who have been in Dublin recently. We also reiterated that I will work with our European colleagues for the benefit of the European Union, a union of 500 million people, which is so important in the interests of this connection with the United States and the bigger world outside.

I'm absolutely thrilled, I have to say, that President Obama has confirmed that he is to

come to Ireland. He follows a long line of Presidents of the United States who visited Ireland. And I can assure you, Mr. President, that his visit will be rapturously received by the people of Ireland.

And from that perspective, I thank you and hope that you will enjoy the fulfilling experience during your visit of visiting Moneygall, where some of your ancestors contributed to the welfare and the well-being of that little village right in the center of Ireland. You will be made very welcome, President, and we appreciate for a person with so many difficulties on his plate as you have, in the global sense, that you'd take time to visit Ireland.

So from that point of view, I can testify as the Irish Taoiseach, this is another great day in our country's journey, and it's a very significant statement of confidence by the most powerful political office in the world that the President of the United States decides to come to Ireland in May. We appreciate that very much, indeed, Mr. President. And we'll make sure that your visit is warmly received and generously treated. And if you want the odd round of golf, I'll be very happy to participate with you.

President Obama. I hear Taoiseach is pretty good, so I've got to be careful. I may have to practice before I play with him.

So thank you so much.

Prime Minister Kenny. Thank you very much, indeed, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Luncheon *March 17, 2011*

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Everyone, please have a seat.

To Taoiseach Kenny; to his lovely wife, who has made a wonderful luncheon companion; to the Vice President, who is here; to our host, Speaker Boehner, for gathering us together; Ambassador Collins and Mrs. Collins; distinguished Members of the House and Senate; distinguished guests from Irish, Northern Irish, and British governments: It is wonder-

ful to be here and a great privilege. It's my privilege to join all of you today for this wonderful St. Patrick's Day celebration, a day when red, white, and blue has a strong hint of green.

Taoiseach Kenny, welcome. We thank you for joining us. Your presence at this lunch virtually guarantees that any partisan clashes will be limited to who is more Irish than whom. [Laughter]