

Now, the news is not out yet, but on some golf course in Ireland, some morning, the local greenkeeper is going to wake up, and he says, a three ball gone down there, and they're not sure who it is. None of them are really good golfers, though, they could have impact in other places. This match has yet to be arranged. It's between the Speaker of the House here, Mr. Boehner, who proclaims that he's the best of the trio—

*Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner.* I do. [Laughter]

*Prime Minister Kenny.* —the President of the United States, and the Taoiseach of Ireland. And we can't go on Air Force One; it's too obvious. We can't go on a military machine, because they would know it's from the U.S. Air Force. So you're going to have to arrive by Irish style, and in that sense, we have our own ways of getting onto golf courses that nobody knows about. [Laughter] And if they find out, you'll understand what the digital communica-

tions system is able to do, because I doubt if you'll get off the place without having to sign thousands of autographs.

Listen, thank you, here in Congress, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, for your diligence, for your friendship, for your courtesy. We love this country and want to work with you for the benefit of so many people. So we've spoken about immigration, Northern Ireland, EU-U.S. trade—that's where the future is. And after all, the future is the only place where we all have to live.

Thank you very much, indeed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. Prime Minister Kenny referred to Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore of Ireland; Ireland's Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Collins; and U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Daniel M. Rooney. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## Remarks at a St. Patrick's Day Reception March 19, 2013

*President Obama.* Hello, everybody! Good evening, everybody.

*Audience members.* Good evening.

*President Obama.* Welcome to St. Patrick's week here at the White House. Not just a day, we get a week.

I want to welcome back our good friend Taoiseach Kenny and his wonderful wife Fionnuala. We are so glad that they are here, and we want to thank them for bringing some genuine Irish shamrocks. I want to say a special thanks to Michael Collins, who has done such an outstanding job here as the Irish Ambassador to the United States. This is his last St. Patrick's Day in America before heading to Germany, so we want to wish him and his lovely wife all the best.

I also want to welcome First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland, who are with us here today. And as I said earlier, I am very much looking forward to visiting Northern Ireland for the G-8 summit in June.

Now, we have way too many Irish and Irish American and wannabe Irish Americans in the house for me to name—[laughter]—but I will say that the next 4 years are shaping up to be very green ones here in the White House. My new Chief of Staff is a McDonough. My National Security Adviser is a Donilon. Our new CIA Director is a Brennan. My new head speechwriter is a Keenan. And Joe Biden has very kindly agreed to stay on as Irishman in Chief. [Laughter]

Now, Joe couldn't be here tonight because he is on his way back from the installation of Pope Francis in Rome. For those of you who know Joe, literally, the only thing that could keep him away from St. Patrick's Day at the White House is the installation of a new Pope. [Laughter] So he sends his best.

Ever since the first son or daughter of the Emerald Isle set foot here on American soil, this day has served as a reminder of just how many threads of green are woven into the red, white, and blue. And in times of war and

peace, good times and bad, Americans have always found a way to celebrate that heritage.

During the Civil War, a quartermaster for the Irish Brigade was sent to Washington to secure a St. Patrick's Day dinner consisting of a side of roasted ox, a pig stuffed with boiled turkeys, and 35 hams. And even during the Great Depression, when food was scarce and families were struggling, a judge in New York informed the District Attorney that he would not try any cases on St. Patrick's Day in which the defendant or the lawyers were Irish. [*Laughter*]

Now, just to be clear: I looked into continuing some of these traditions. No, I could not get the White House chefs to go along or the Attorney General to go along with these traditions. [*Laughter*] So tonight we're going in a slightly different direction, but we do so mindful of the fact that even in times of trouble, if we're lucky enough to be Irish—even if it's only in spirit—then we're lucky enough. And that's reason to give thanks.

Looking out on this room, it's clear just how much America owes to our brothers and sisters from across the Atlantic, and how many of us—myself included—wouldn't be here if it were not for the brave souls who set off for the New World with no earthly idea of what awaited them on the other side.

And it's a reminder of just how many trials the people of Ireland have endured, from hunger and troubles, to the economic challenges of recent years. It's yet another reason why we need to build an immigration system for the 21st century, one that works for families and businesses and our economy. But it's also a tribute to the incredible resilience of the Irish character and the enormous power of faith: in God, in one another, and in the possibility of a better life.

It was that faith that brought millions of Irish to our shores, but that faith alone didn't join our two nations in common cause. It was how the Irish put that faith into practice in their new Nation. They wanted a government of and by and for the people, so they helped us design one. And they understood the importance of saving the Union, so they fought and died for the cause. They saw potential in our

railways, bridges, and skyscrapers, so they poured their sweat and blood into building them. And they believed that each of us has an obligation, not just to ourselves, but to each other and to our country. So that's how they lived their lives here in America.

A great nation is one that contributes more to the world than it takes out, and by that definition, America owes a profound debt of gratitude to the great nation of Ireland. And together, our people have never stopped dreaming of a better future and never stopped working to make that dream a reality.

And we saw that again in October, when Hurricane Sandy set off one of the worst residential fires in New York City's history. Hundreds of homes were left charred and flooded, and many families were suddenly faced with the task of picking up the pieces and rebuilding their lives, including in Breezy Point, a neighborhood with a large Irish American population. In fact, more than half of Breezy Point residents can trace their families to the old country, and the folks back in the old country were not about to sit by and watch their American brothers and sisters struggle alone.

So they pitched in. Gaelic rock stars raised money. Athletes from the Gaelic Games did construction work and brought the Sam Maguire chalice with them to lift spirits. The Irish Tenors came over to sing Christmas carols. The Irish Government pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars, not just to help the residents of Breezy Point, but to help folks rebuild across the region. And the Taoiseach himself was in Breezy Point on Sunday to attend Mass.

As one official said, "New York has been very good to the Irish, and now the Irish are giving back to New York." And that's the story of America and Ireland: We look out for each other, we have each other's backs, and we recognize that no challenge is too great, no obstacle is too high, if you've got a friend beside you and a nation behind you. That's been our history; that will be our future.

So I hope everyone has a wonderful time. There's an old Irish saying that the recipe for a long life is to leave the table hungry, leave the bed sleepy, leave the bar thirsty. [*Laughter*]

We'll see if that works tonight. Happy Saint Patrick's Day, everybody.

And now I'd like to introduce my good friend and our honored guest, Taoiseach Kenny.

[At this point, Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland said a phrase in Irish, and no transcription or translation was provided.]

Prime Minister Kenny. Mr. President, First Lady, Happy Saint Patrick's week to you, your families, and the American people. I'm delighted to be here. I want to join with the President in wishing Ambassador Michael Collins and his wife Marie the very best. Thank you for your service to this country and to Ireland.

I'd like to add to that the service given by Ambassador Dan Rooney and his wife Patricia from the United States to Ireland, two wonderful people also. And thank you, Mr. President, for your warm welcome that you've given to Fionnuala and to me, to the *Tánaiste* and Carol, and indeed everyone in the Irish delegation. It really is a privilege and wonderful to be back. Our warmest congratulations on your second term. Perhaps there will be—[*applause*—perhaps there will be a second visit home in due course. [*Laughter*]

For generations now, there's been a very special relationship between the President of the United States and the Irish people. In fact, if the truth could be confirmed—and it's difficult to do so—there are reports that President Lincoln himself is living in County Wicklow—[*laughter*—and he's married to Arthur Miller's daughter. [*Laughter*]

In 1963, President Kennedy came home to Ireland. He told our Parliament, our Dáil, about the Irish Brigade, the Fighting 69th. Thanks to him, that brigade's green flag speaks almost as eloquently as he did, at Leinster House today. From Bull Run to Fredericksburg to Gettysburg, the Fighting 69th distinguished themselves on the battleground, showing outstanding courage and resilience and intelligence. And for you, Mr. President, their battle cry in Irish was *fág an bealach*—"clear the way." Can you say that? *Fág an bealach*.

President Obama. *Fág an bealach*.

Prime Minister Kenny. [*Inaudible*] Generations on, it rings out loud and clear on the other side of the Atlantic, because after difficult years, we, the Irish people, are at last clearing the way. *Táimid ag fáigaint an bealach*: To a brighter, better, more prosperous future, both this time for all our people.

Mr. President, a *chairde Gael*, we've still a long way to go on our journey to national recovery. But tonight I'm proud to say here in the White House: That confidence is returning to our country and to our people.

Here this evening with this bowl of shamrock that contains traditional Irish shamrock, we've got a perfect example of that new confidence and that new hope. Because unlike the bowl that James Joyce spoke of at the Atlantic, of "the bowl of bitter tears," or President Kennedy, this bowl here was made by Sean Egan, unemployed 4 years ago. He spent 300 hours creating this in a labor of love.

It sparkles with the story of who we are now. It glistens with the story of what we once brought here on the risky yet life-giving journey to America, not only those memories of place and home and family, but our songs, our music, our stories, sung and recited until they were threadbare so that new generations—many of you here—could actually make them your own.

Just as we Irish made our own of America, today in Ireland, we do as we have always done. As a nation, we make joy from sadness. As a country, we forge success from difficulty. As a republic, we create ourselves anew. And as we do, we remember and we honor the old.

They say that if you laid out a timber memorial for every Irish man, woman, and child buried at sea on the Famine Crossing that you could walk from Cork to Boston. They say, as we say in Irish, that they're *idir eadartha*—"in between"—between past and future, between two nations, two republics who stand proud and determined and strong, either side of the Atlantic Ocean; exhilarated indeed by the possibilities of science, intrigued by the potential of discovery, and curious about the secrets and the powers of invention; united in our passionate belief in the capacity of experiment and

thought and imagination and, indeed, intuition itself to transform our world.

And when the crew of the International Space Station—who are on Twitter—[*inaudible*—these days, when they look on this world, on our planet and see it go a little greener, chances are they don't just think American, they don't just think British or Indonesian or any place else, they might well think that down there, that's our human family, the family of man, and they are at home.

And because we are, Mr. President. For all we build, for all we make in finance, in politics, in business or economics, we know, because of these connections, that our real wealth are the reserves of love and kindness and insight and understanding and courage and compassion that were so carefully attained and accrued over those many long years. And as we celebrate St. Patrick and St. Patrick's week, let us build on those reserves to build better nations, better people, and a better world. There, here,

Mr. President, the sun is new every day. And may it shine brightly on our peoples and on all that we undertake together in the cause of each other.

So in your responsibilities all around the world, the many onerous responsibilities you carry, we wish you good fortune and good health and success. And in the words of the Fighting 69th: "Our Union, our country, and Ireland forever. *Fág an bealach.*" *Is féidir linn.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Director of Speechwriting Cody S. Keenan. Prime Minister Kenny referred to Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore of Ireland and his wife Carol Hanney; author and filmmaker Rebecca Miller, wife of Irish actor Daniel Day-Lewis, who portrayed Abraham Lincoln in the film "Lincoln"; and crystal engraver Sean Egan.

## Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the Iraq War March 19, 2013

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq war, Michelle and I join our fellow Americans in paying tribute to all who served and sacrificed in one of our Nation's longest wars. We salute the courage and resolve of more than 1.5 million servicemembers and civilians who, during multiple tours, wrote one of the most extraordinary chapters in military service. We honor the memory of the nearly 4,500 Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice to give the Iraqi people an opportunity to forge their own future after many years of hardship. And we express our gratitude to our extraordinary military families who sacrificed on the home front, especially our Gold Star families who remain in our prayers.

The last of our troops left Iraq with their heads held high in 2011, and the United States continues to work with our Iraqi partners to

advance our shared interest in security and peace. Here at home, our obligations to those who served endure. We must ensure that the more than 30,000 Americans wounded in Iraq receive the care and benefits they deserve and that we continue to improve treatment for traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. With a strong post-9/11 GI bill, we must help our newest veterans pursue their education and find jobs worthy of their incredible talents. And all Americans can continue to support and honor our military families who are pillars of so many of our communities. On this solemn anniversary, we draw strength and inspiration from these American patriots who exemplify the values of courage, selflessness, and teamwork that define our Armed Forces and keep our Nation great.