

Kennedy Center in May, there's a 3-week opportunity to learn the poetry of Ireland, the songs of Ireland, the music of Ireland. If you want to participate, you'd be more than welcome.

I also understand that here in the U.S., there will be the Ireland 100; it's a 3-week festival of Irish arts and culture, which takes place, as I say, over that period.

Let me just say, finally, that I know that—I think on the grounds of the Capitol Building here, there will be the planting of an oak tree. Whether you plant it, or whoever plants it, it's a privilege that it should grow here. And it's an Irish oak. And my hope would be that as we start the journey of the second hundred years, that when that tree is a hundred years old, and it stands proudly here in the vicinity of the Capitol Building, that it has grown tall and straight into the light, and that it represents our country and the pride that we feel in being here in America, in this building, which was partially constructed under the engineering ingenuity of James Hoban, who designed the White House—so when you're relaxed on there, Mr. President, it's an Irish architect who designed that for you. [*Laughter*] But I do hope that that tree represents a symbol of continuity and that

it reflects the best of what it is: of truth and courage and our common humanity.

And that's where we need to be. And that's where politics can bring us. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Fionnuala Kenny, wife of Prime Minister Kenny; Vice President Joe Biden; and Senate Majority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell. Prime Minister Kenny referred to former Sen. Gary W. Hart, in his capacity as the U.S. Secretary of State's Personal Representative for Northern Ireland; Reps. Peter T. King and Richard E. Neal, in their capacity as cochairs of the Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus; the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Theresa Villiers; First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister J. Martin P. McGuinness of Northern Ireland; Sharon Ismay, wife of Adrian Ismay, a Northern Ireland prison officer who was injured in a bombing in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on March 4, and subsequently died from his injuries on March 15; former Sen. George J. Mitchell, in his former capacity as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives John A. Boehner.

Remarks at a St. Patrick's Day Reception March 15, 2016

Vice President Joe Biden. Hello, folks! Welcome to the White House. How are you? Good to see you; it's a beautiful dress. Folks, my name is Joe Biden. I work for Barack Obama. And I have the great honor of introducing our next three guests.

In 1963, President Kennedy addressed the Irish Parliament and said, and I quote, "Our two nations, divided by distance, have been united by history." Today we celebrate that shared heritage that has defined so many of us and—as individuals, and it's defined our country as well.

And it's clear why this day is so important to many of you and to me and the President, who

have ancestors who are from Ireland, who left behind everything to find a new home and find a place in that Promised Land, America. In the face of oppression, they held strong, strong, strong beliefs. They planted deep roots, and they looked to the future. It's the immigrant story of all who came here.

And the truth is that the greatest contribution the Irish brought to this country is a set of values: hard work, family, a sense of community, pride, faith, and idealism. My mother had an expression—and I mean this sincerely—she talked about, being Irish was about family, faith, but most of all, it was about courage. She said, because without courage, you cannot love

with abandon. And to be Irish is to be able to love with abandon, to be able to dream.

Oscar Wilde said: “Yes, I’m a dreamer, for a dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight. And his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world.” Millions—millions—of Irish men and women look to that dawn, and they forge their dreams into the foundation stones that literally formed this great nation of ours, all believing in something that defines America in a single word. The uniqueness of this country, in my view, can be summed up in one word. We’re all about possibilities. Anything—anything—is possible.

That’s who we are as Americans. In my view, that’s the Irish of it. I’ve felt it. My family has felt it. All of you have felt it. And the three people I’m about to introduce, they have felt it, as well. Ladies and gentlemen, my friend, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, the Taoiseach of Ireland, Enda Kenny, and his wife Fionnuala.

President Obama. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Happy St. Patrick’s Week. [Laughter] Once again, today is not technically St. Paddy’s Day. And once again, this does not seem to bother any of you one bit. [Laughter] But if you are lucky enough to be Irish, you’re lucky enough.

This, of course, is one of my favorite events. I get to welcome my people. [Laughter] And the Obamas of Leinster are nothing if not welcoming. We’ve got “trad.” We’ve got pints of black. It’s up to you to provide the *craic*. [Laughter]

This is my 8th St. Patrick’s Day as President, and this is my 25th set of St. Patrick’s Day remarks as President. This is true.

Vice President Biden. Not nearly enough. [Laughter]

President Obama. When you include the speeches I’ve given in Dublin and Northern Ireland, we are pushing 30. But fortunately, the Irish are not short on inspiration.

Everybody here is Irish; I am positive of it. There’s some particularly “indomitable Irishry” in the house. But we are thrilled to once again host Taoiseach Enda Kenny. Give him a big round of applause. His wife Fionnuala—give her a bigger round of applause. And we are in

the presence of one of America’s great Irish American heroes, Vice President Joe Biden. [Applause] Hey!

Blessed are the peacemakers, and from Northern Ireland, we welcome their first female First Minister, Arlene Foster, and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. The U.K.’s Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers, is here. Give her a big round of applause. And Irish Foreign Minister Charlie Flanagan. They’ve done a great job of representing their governments in the negotiations that led to the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements, so we’re very proud of them.

And former Secretary Gary—former Senator Gary Hart, as Secretary Kerry’s Personal Representative, has done an extraordinary job representing America, along with our Consul General in Belfast, Dan Lawton. So thank all of you.

In addition, our Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Matthew Barzun, is here, as is our Ambassador to Ireland, Kevin O’Malley. Hey! As you can see and hear, although Kevin has only been in Ireland for 18 months, he has crammed in almost 8 years of work. [Laughter] One of his legacies will be his “Creative Minds” initiative, in which he’s been busy connecting the next generation of Irish and American leaders who will be singing in this room someday. So thank you, Kevin. Your Mayo grandparents would be proud.

And one of the warmest women you’ll ever meet is Ireland’s Ambassador to the United States, Anne Anderson. I’m going to embarrass Anne for a second. A few days ago, she became the first woman ever admitted into the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. And to underscore what a big deal this is, only one other person ever has been “adopted” into that society. This is true: It was this guy right here, George Washington. So you are keeping good company, Anne. Congratulations. [Laughter]

Our Ambassador to Japan, Caroline Kennedy, is also here. And she may have made the longest trip. And although Caroline never likes to draw attention to herself, she’s out here somewhere. And obviously, Caroline’s family

will forever represent the centrality of Irish heritage to our American story.

There's a whole brood of Irish American Members of Congress here as well, including, from Caroline's family, Joe Kennedy, who's a new father to a baby girl. If—that's worth congratulating. You can't beat daughters. If anyone is in need of a good song, Joe Crowley has one of the finer singing voices in Washington. [Laughter] But, Joe, please wait until I'm done speaking. [Laughter]

Now, some of you may have seen a front page of the Galway City Tribune last summer that blared, in huge print: "He's on His Way! Hopes That Obama Will Make Paddy's Day Speech in Eyre Square." I don't know how this rumor got started. It might have been somebody on my staff who just wanted another trip to Ireland. [Laughter] But I do have joyous memories of my own trips to the Emerald Isle. And Ireland really is, as Seamus Heaney described it, a place that can "catch the heart off guard and blow it open." Most of all, I remember how the Irish people made me feel so at home, like my cousin Henry and his pubkeeper, Ollie, who are here again today.

Audience member. Hey!

President Obama. There you go! They're around here somewhere.

So I now understand what President Kennedy meant when he said that once he couldn't run again, he'd endorse the Democratic candidate who would promise to appoint him Ambassador to Ireland. [Laughter] I would like to point out, I have not yet endorsed. [Laughter] A certain commitment, quietly made, would not hurt. [Laughter]

Of course, for the Irish, home is everywhere. And perhaps no other country in the world is more "everywhere" than the United States. We are braided together in so many ways, America and Ireland. We've been for centuries, through history and bloodline. We've waged war side by side. We've waged peace side by side. We are family and we are friends.

This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the 1916 Proclamation. And I'm struck with how ahead of its time the proclamation was. It

was a daring document, one which its authors were very particular to address to "Irishmen and Irishwomen." It's built around "religious and civil liberty, equal rights, and equal opportunities" and "cherishing all the children of the nation equally."

Cherishing all the children of the world—of the nation equally. That's a vision statement a hundred years ago, and it would be a visionary statement today. It's a universal value, like the ones in America's own founding documents, that compels us to continually look forward; that gives us the chance to change; that dares us, American and Irish alike, to keep toiling towards our better selves.

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally means striving to make sure they grow up with equal rights and equal opportunities. And I should point out that Ireland, last year, legalized marriage equality, and a month later, America was proud to join you. This year, New York's St. Patrick's Day parade is allowing Irish LGBT groups to march for the very first time. As Ambassador Anderson has said, "Irish America is making a statement: There are no second-class citizens, no children of a lesser God."

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally means making our immigration system smarter and fairer and more just. I think of something powerful that the Taoiseach said here a few years ago about people "waiting to be herded into ships; mothers soothing children, perhaps not even their own; husbands calling for wives, and wives calling for husbands—two peoples who would cross that single dividing ocean, the Irish to freedom; the Africans to slavery."

Now, my own daughters have the blood of both peoples, Irish and Africans, running through their veins. And that makes them something more powerful: It makes them Americans. All of us came from someplace else. America is made of generations of men and women who crossed oceans and borders to come here, some in extraordinarily dire circumstances. Tireless waves of immigrants: from Ireland, yes, but also Italy and Germany, from Russia and China, Southeast Asia, from

Latin America and Africa. And many set down roots and became some of our most influential citizens.

We encourage the latest generation of eligible immigrants—some 8.8 million permanent residents, including many Irish—to take the same step in their American journey. Many are students who, except for the circumstances of their birth, are as American as my own daughters, as Joe’s children and grandchildren, students who bravely came out as undocumented in the hopes that they could earn the right to become citizens and make a difference in the country that they love.

Our neighbors, our classmates, our friends—they did not come here in search of a free ride. They came to work and to study and to serve in our military and, above all, to contribute to our success. That is the American Dream. And the American Dream is something that no wall will ever contain.

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally means nurturing a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Eighteen years of peace means a whole generation has grown up living the dreams of their parents and grandparents: to travel without the burden of checkpoints or roadblocks or soldiers on patrol, to enjoy a sunny day free from the ever-present awareness that violence could blacken it at any moment, to befriend or fall in love with whomever they want. And while so many of you in this room negotiated the terms of peace, the fate is—of peace is up to our young people. After all, 18 years of peace means that peace can vote now. [Laughter] So we have to keep setting an example, through our words and our actions, that peace is a path worth pursuing.

The Irish author, Colum McCann, who America now claims as our own, I understand is here today. Where are you, Colum? He’s an excellent writer. He may be—

Vice President Biden. All the way in the back.

President Obama. —he’s all the way in the back. I love his books. He once wrote, “Peace”—there he is right there. Colum once wrote: “Peace is indeed harder than war, and its constant fragility is part of its beauty. A bullet need happen only once, but for peace to

work, we need to be reminded of its existence again and again and again.”

That’s what so many of you have worked to do, again and again and again. And the world has noticed. As I said in Belfast, hope is contagious. And you’ve designed a hopeful blueprint for others to follow. You’re proof of what’s possible. I’m very proud that my administration has played a part in helping you to make hope one of your greatest exports.

So, in closing, on the occasion of my final St. Patrick’s Day with all of you—

Audience members. No!

President Obama. Well, I mean, we may meet in a pub in Dublin or something.

Audience members. Yes!

President Obama. I’m saying, in the White House. [Laughter] And my 30th set of remarks for an Irish audience, I’d like to close with a poem from an Irishwoman, Eavan Boland, that she wrote about a 30th anniversary:

this is the day to think of it, to wonder:
all those years, all those years together—
the stars in a frozen arc overhead,
the quick noise of a thaw in the air,
the blue stare of the hills—through it all
this constancy: what wears, what endures.

So, to the constancy of our enduring friendship. May Ireland and America forever cherish and brilliantly sustain all our sons and daughters equally.

Happy St. Paddy’s Day, everybody. Good-night and be with—may joy be with all of you.

Let me now introduce our honored guest, Taoiseach Kenny. Please come to the stage.

[At this point, Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland spoke briefly in Gaelic, and no translation was provided. He then spoke in English as follows.]

Prime Minister Kenny. Thank you, and you’re all welcome. Now, Mr. President; Mr. Vice President; Mr. Flanagan; First and Deputy First Minister; Ambassadors; ladies and gentlemen: When I was outside, I said to the President, it’s not often you get the chance of speaking with the President of the United

States, the Vice President of the United States, and my wife. [Laughter]

President Obama. There she is.

Prime Minister Kenny. And so I said, the election is over in Ireland. There are a few things I want to say about it. So I'm going to speak for 2 hours. [Laughter] That was just a fleeting thought. [Laughter]

Thank you, Mr. President. It gives Fionnuala and myself, on behalf of the people of Ireland, the greatest of pleasure to mark St. Patrick's Day, week, time with you, a special time for the Irish family worldwide.

And let me again thank you, President, for all the times you've been here, for the warmth of your hospitality, the generosity of your time, and the continued interest that you and your administration have shown for Ireland and Northern Ireland. Gary Hart, George Mitchell, Joe Biden, Kevin O'Malley, everybody—thank you.

Might I say—and actually, the bowl of shamrock is more important than it looks because it's a symbol. It's a link. It's a symbolic link, a symbolic claim going back these many St. Patrick's Days.

Now, you all know what happened. A teenager was taken away from his home. He was transported to Ireland. He was put into slavery, to mind sheep on a hillside. He was a shepherd, yes, but he was also a slave. And those who made him a slave had no idea that in time and in the process, they were also making him the saint and symbol of a nation.

Similarly, years later, having returned to the scene of his slavery, he picked up a little three-piece piece of greenery just to illustrate an idea. You will understand that this was in the days before PowerPoint displays and so on. [Laughter] And to St. Patrick, the shamrock was just a handy little piece of greenery, just a prop. No more than that. And that tiny piece of greenery became the quintessence, the instantly recognizable brand of a modern nation. And more, here in this White House, designed by James Hoban, from Dublin, it has become a yearly reminder of the ties that bind our two nations. And the ties that bind America and

Ireland are ties of blood and kinship, ties of trade and tradition, ties of hopes and dreams.

Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to you for your outstanding leadership over the last 7 years, to thank you for all you've done for Irish-U.S. relationships in that time. [Applause] See?

Sir, Mr. President, you came into office at the most challenging times in terms of the global economic situation. And I believe that your steadfast and courageous leadership played a huge role in ensuring that the global recession did not become a global depression.

Leadership requires courage. Ultimately, that's what politics is about, the triumph of hope over hate. Because when hate is deployed, it doesn't just diminish those who deploy it, it diminishes all of us. Whereas hope, hope is that golden currency that never devalues, that never tarnishes. And it's hope, and not hatred, was what animated the dreamers and the patriots in the 1916 rebellion in Dublin. Hope, not hatred, was what animated great Presidents, like Lincoln, to turn enemies into friends.

Very many of the Irish found hope in America. They found opportunity. They found challenge. And they found a society that valued hard work and that valued contribution. They became police officers and nurses, firefighters, domestic servants, dockers, coal miners, railroaders, and so on. They built bridges and railways and docks and skyscrapers.

And during my time as Taoiseach, we've reached out to the Irish diaspora as never before to have seen more of those descendants of those who left coming back to experience a new Ireland, where, in the words of Seamus Heaney, hope and history rhyme.

So, although a small country, we've always been committed to making a big difference in the world. We know that any contribution that we can make to tackling global problems such as terrorism, hunger, climate change can only be achieved through strong global partnership. And I want to applaud, publicly, President Obama's tireless efforts on the world's stage in promoting dialogue, common sense, and part-

nership in the pursuit of peace and a sustainable future for humanity.

Ask any of the 35 million Americans who now have the hope and the realization of health assistance in their time of need, and they can answer, Barack Obama delivered that for me.

In conclusion, let me again mention 1916. As many of you know, the United States is the only country that was specifically mentioned in the 1916 Proclamation. And the signatories recognized, as they said, the support of our exiled children in America, a reference to the many millions of our people in this country who supported the cause of Irish freedom for generations. The inscription is on the bowl: Our exiled children in America.

Let me just conclude on this. What St. Patrick did, whether he realized it or not, was actually the quintessence of great leadership, or should I say, in the words of one more eloquent and more famous than I, “the audacity of hope”—[laughter]—and the determination to

leave the world better than he found it, just like President Barack Obama.

And so now it is my pleasure and my privilege on behalf of the people of our country and the 70 million Irish people all over the world, to present this bowl of shamrock, tried and tested, to President of the United States Barack Obama.

Thank you all very much. Hope you have a wonderful evening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:59 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Eleanor Kennedy, daughter of Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III; Rep. Joseph Crowley; Ollie Hayes, owner of the Ollie Hayes Bar in Moneygall, Ireland; and R. Hunter and Ashley B. Biden, children, and R. Hunter Biden, Jr., and Natalie, Finnegan, Naomi, and Roberta “Maisy” Biden, grandchildren, of Vice President Biden. He also referred to his cousin Henry Healy. Prime Minister Kenny referred to former Sen. George J. Mitchell, in his former capacity as U.S. Special Envoy to Northern Ireland.

Statement on the Selection of a Nominee for United States Supreme Court Associate Justice *March 16, 2016*

Today, I will announce the person whom I believe is eminently qualified to sit on the Supreme Court.

As President, it is both my constitutional duty to nominate a Justice and one of the most important decisions that I—or any president—will make.

I’ve devoted a considerable amount of time and deliberation to this decision. I’ve consulted with legal experts and people across the political spectrum, both inside and outside government. And we’ve reached out to every member of the Senate, who each have a responsibility to do their job and take this nomination just as seriously.

Please join me in the Rose Garden at 11:00 am Eastern for my announcement.

This is a responsibility I do not take lightly. In considering several candidates, I held each

to three principles that reflect the role the Supreme Court plays in our democracy.

First, a Justice should possess an independent mind, unimpeachable credentials, and an unquestionable mastery of law. There is no doubt this person will face complex legal questions, so it is imperative that he or she possess a rigorous intellect that will help provide clear answers.

Second, a Justice should recognize the limits of the judiciary’s role. With a commitment to impartial justice rather than any particular ideology, the next Supreme Court Justice will understand that the job is to interpret the law, not make law.

However, I know there will be cases before the Supreme Court in which the law is not clear. In those cases, a Justice’s analysis will