

**REMARKS OF SENATOR KENNEDY  
INTRODUCTION OF PRIME MINISTER BERTIE AHERN  
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*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Ireland and the United States share a unique bond of history and heritage. In fact, Ireland was present at the creation of our country. Irish immigrants served so well in the Continental Army that Lord Mountjoy told Parliament, “We have lost America because of the Irish.”

Our close ties have now spanned centuries and they continue to grow stronger and deeper with each new generation.

The great affinity and the mutual respect of Ireland and America for each other today are reflected in the extraordinary friendship of our two nations, which continues to flourish and strengthen as we work together to create a better world of peace and hope.

As the poet Yeats wrote, “Think where man’s glory most begins and ends  
And say, my glory was I had such friends.”

Nearly 40 million Americans today are of Irish descent. Here in Massachusetts alone, one of every three citizens can trace their roots to Ireland. As much as any other educational or cultural institution, building or landmark in the United States, the Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum today are closely identified with Ireland and Irish Americans.

Our family ties with Ireland began in the massive potato famine of the mid-19th century when all eight of my great-grandparents emigrated to Boston. As President Kennedy once said, our great grandfather came to Boston in 1848 and “carried nothing with him except two things: a strong religious faith and a strong desire for liberty.” Each of our family members has cherished and honored that inheritance, and we’re proud to have the map of Ireland on our faces.

Those early years weren’t easy for the Irish in America. Here in Boston, it was said of Irish immigrant construction workers in the 19th century, “It’s a good thing the wheelbarrow was invented. It taught the Irish to walk on their hind legs.”

When I was growing up in the city, my grandfather used to point out the signs in shop windows saying “No Irish Need Apply.”

But he never let me forget the joy of being Irish. He loved to take me down to the Harbor, point across the water and tell me, “On a clear day, you can see all the way to Ireland.”

My brothers and sisters felt the same way. In fact one of the most important contributions we made to Ireland in recent years has been the incredible work of my sister Jean. She did such an outstanding job a decade ago as America's Ambassador to Ireland that she was named an honorary citizen there. All of the Kennedys are immensely proud of her, and I know that President Kennedy would be as well.

Next month marks the 45th anniversary of President Kennedy's historic visit to the land of his ancestors. He always thought of himself as a son of Ireland too, and he was passionately committed to Ireland's future. During his visit to Limerick that year, he said, "This is not the land of my birth, but it is the land for which I hold the greatest affection."

He also said that "Great powers have their responsibilities and their burdens, but the smaller nations of the world must fulfill their obligations as well," and Ireland has surely done that.

Addressing the Irish Parliament in Dublin during that visit, my brother spoke of the special role of Ireland in the world: "My friends," he said, "Ireland's hour has come. You have something to give the world, and that is a future of peace with freedom."

Prime Minister Ahern has indeed been true to those words. He worked magnificently over the years to give a future of enduring peace and freedom for all the people of Northern Ireland.

He first entered politics in 1977, and has been re-elected 10 times in the past 31 years. In 1994 he became the leader of his party, Fianna Fail. Three years later he became Prime Minister, and he's now the second longest-serving Taoiseach in the history of Ireland.

He is also the first Taoiseach since 1944 to prevail in three successive elections.

One of the most impressive hallmarks of his success is his achievement in strengthening the Irish economy. Through his skillful leadership, Ireland is now more prosperous than at any other time in its history. Because of that economic boom, Ireland has become renowned throughout the world as the "Celtic Tiger."

Above all, though, he is a man of peace. Earlier this week, the Taoiseach addressed a Joint Session of the United States Congress. The heart of his address was contained in four simple beautiful words. He received thunderous applause when he told us, "Ireland is at peace."

His address was an inspiring reaffirmation of the deep bonds and shared values of both countries, and our common global vision of a world where human dignity, equality, and freedom are enjoyed by all peoples on earth.

As we know so well, Prime Minister Ahern's brilliant leadership was indispensable in achieving a successful resolution of the endless cycle of violence and hatred that had wracked Northern Ireland for decades, and he was a powerful voice in transforming it

from conflict to cooperation.

He was relentless in the pursuit of peace. He refused to be discouraged, and worked tenaciously with political leaders on both sides to move the peace process forward.

During his very first month in office as Taoiseach in 1997, he and British Prime Minister Tony Blair breathed new life into the negotiations. His unique political skills were critical to maintaining that dialogue, nurturing it, and finally resolving the endless disputes and disagreements that constantly threatened to derail the fragile peace process.

The Good Friday Peace Agreement of 1998 never would have happened without his leadership and neither would the historic return of power to the Northern Ireland Assembly last year and the miracle of Protestants and Catholics sharing power and working side by side in government.

In the words of Prime Minister Blair, the Taoiseach is a “remarkable leader” who “will always be remembered for his crucial role in bringing about peace in Northern Ireland.”

As President Kennedy said in Dublin so many years ago, “It is that quality of the Irish - that remarkable combination of hope, confidence and imagination - that is needed more than ever today. The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics, whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were, and ask why not.”

Prime Minister Ahern has given so much to the land of our ancestors in his many years in public service. And all of us who know him and admire him believe he still has much to give to heal our divided world. His greatest legacy may well be the example he sets in the years to come as a peacemaker for other nations struggling to end brutal sectarian violence in their own lands.

We say to him now, in the words of the famous Irish blessing:  
Green are the hills of Ireland  
And green they will always stay.  
Warm are the blessings wished for you,  
And they'll always stay that way.

It's a very special honor to welcome the Prime Minister to my brother's library, and to introduce him now - the Taoiseach we all admire so much, Prime Minister Bertie Ahern.