

and passion, true friendship can exist in this town. Tip and President Reagan famously had fierce battles and genuine disagreements. But after the work ended, the two men did their best to put partisanship aside. According to Tip, President Reagan used to begin calls with, “Hello, Tip, is it after 6 o’clock?” [Laughter] To which the Speaker would reply, “Absolutely, Mr. President.” And then they could enjoy each other’s company.

For his part, the President said he always knew Tip was behind him, even if it was just at the State of the Union—[laughter]—whispering to the Vice President after every policy proposal, “Forget it.” [Laughter] “No way.” “Fat chance.” [Laughter] I can relate. [Laughter]

So it is no surprise that the two proud Irishmen came together to start this luncheon, with the Speaker promising to cook some Boston corned beef and the President offering to “polish up some new Irish jokes.” Later, our friend Ted Kennedy and others persuaded Taoiseach to join them. And today, the only argument we have is over who has more green in their family tree.

For once, I have some bragging rights here. Last spring, the Taoiseach and Mrs. Kenny hosted Michelle and I for a wonderful visit to Ireland. And one of the highlights was a trip to the small village of Moneygall, where my great-great-great-grandfather on my mother’s side lived before he set sail for America. I met

my eighth cousin Henry, who has my ears, I might point out. [Laughter] We had a pint of Guinness at the local pub. And I got a chance to see firsthand the kind of hospitality that the big-hearted people of Ireland have always been known for.

So today is about celebrating those people, as well as the tens of millions of Americans who trace their heritage across the ocean to the Emerald Isle. Never has a nation so small had such an enormous impact on another. Never has anyone taught us more about the value of faith and friendship, about the capacity of the human spirit, about the simple truth that it’s harder to disagree when we recognize ourselves in each other, which is easier to do when we’re all wearing green.

So to Taoiseach Kenny, I want to thank you and Fionnuala for joining us here today. And I want to thank the people of Ireland for their friendship, now and always. Cheers.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:58 p.m. in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland and his wife Fionnuala; and Ireland’s Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Collins and his wife Marie. He also referred to his cousin Henry Healy of Moneygall, Ireland. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a St. Patrick’s Day Reception March 20, 2012

President Obama. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

President Obama. Well, welcome to the White House. This does not sound like a shy crowd. [Laughter]

As you may have noticed, today is not, in fact, St. Patrick’s Day. [Laughter] We just wanted to prove that America considers Ireland a dear and steadfast friend every day of the year. Some of you may have noticed, we even brought the cherry blossoms out early for our Irish and Northern Irish visitors. And we

will be sure to plant these beautiful shamrocks right away.

I want to welcome back my good friend Taoiseach Kenny; his extraordinary wife Fionnuala. This has been our third working visit in just over a year, and each one has been better than the last.

I’ve had the pleasure to welcome back First Minister Peter Robinson; Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland as well.

And, everyone, please welcome my new friends from Moneygall. My long-lost cousin

Henry; his mother Mary is here as well. And my favorite pub keeper, Ollie Hayes, is here with his beautiful wife. He was interested in hiring Michelle—[*laughter*—when she was pouring a pint. I said, she's too busy, maybe at the end of our second term.

In return, I did take them out for a pint at the Dubliner here in Washington, DC, on Saturday. That's right, I saw some of you there. [*Laughter*] I won't—I didn't take pictures. And I've asked them to please say hello to everybody back home for me.

Now, while there are too many Irish Americans to acknowledge by name here tonight, I do want to thank Martin O'Malley and his band for rocking the White House for the evening. It's said that the curse of the Irish, as the Governor must know, is not that they don't know the words to a song—it's that they know them all. [*Laughter*]

As you may know, I finally got to spend a day in Ireland with Michelle last May. I visited my ancestral village of Moneygall, saw my great-great-great-grandfather's house. I had the distinct honor of addressing the Irish people from College Green in Dublin. And when it comes to their famous reputation for hospitality and good cheer, the Irish outdid themselves. Michelle and I received absolutely the warmest of welcomes, and I've been trying to return the favor as best I can.

There really was something magical about the whole day, and I know that I'm not the only person who feels that way when they visit Ireland. Even my most famously Irish American predecessor was surprised about how deeply Ireland affected him when he visited in his third year as President. "It is strange," President Kennedy said on his last day in Ireland, "that so many years and so many generations pass, and still some of us who come on this trip could feel ourselves among neighbors, even though we are separated by generations, by time, and by thousands of miles."

I know most of you can relate to that. I think anyone who's had a chance to visit can relate. And that's why Jackie Kennedy later visited Ireland with her children and gave one of President Kennedy's dog tags to his cousins in

Dunganstown. And that's why I felt so at home when I visited Moneygall.

When my great-great-great-grandfather arrived in New York City after a voyage that began there, the St. Patrick's Society in Brooklyn had just held its first annual banquet. And a toast was made to family back home enduring what were impossibly difficult years: "Through gloomy shadows hang over thee now, as darkness is densest, even just before day, so thy gloom, truest Erin, may soon pass away."

Because for all the remarkable things the Irish have done in the course of human history—keeping alive the flame of knowledge in dark ages, outlasting a great hunger, forging a peace that once seemed impossible—the green strands they have woven into America's heart, from their tiniest villages through our greatest cities, is something truly unique on the world stage. And these strands of affection will never fray, nor will they come undone.

While those times and the troubles of later generations were far graver than anything we could fathom today, many of our people are still fighting to get back on solid ground after several challenging years. But we choose to rise to these times for the same reason we rose to those tougher times: Because we are all proud peoples who share more than sprawling family trees. We are peoples who share an unshakable faith, an unbending commitment to our fellow man, and a resilient and audacious hope. And that's why I say of Ireland tonight what I said in Dublin last May: This little country that inspires the biggest things, its best days are still ahead.

So I propose a toast to the Taoiseach and the people of Ireland. Do I have any—where's my drink? [*Laughter*] Here it is, here it is. All right, here we go. It's only water but—obviously, somebody didn't prepare. [*Laughter*]

To quote your first President, Douglas Hyde: "A word is more lasting than the riches of the world." And tonight, grateful for our shared past and hopeful for our common future, I give my word to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and to the people of Ireland: As long as I am President, you will have a strong friend, a

steadfast ally, and a faithful partner in the United States of America.

Ladies and gentlemen, Taoiseach Kenny. Cheers!

[At this point, Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland made brief remarks, during which he presented President Obama with a certificate of Irish heritage and a bowl of shamrocks.]

President Obama. Well, thank you. First of all, this will have a special place of honor alongside my birth certificate. *[Laughter]* Absolutely. Absolutely. The shamrocks have brought good luck to our garden over the past few years. And I am extraordinarily grateful to you, Taoiseach and Fionnuala, for just being such wonderful hosts to us when we were there. But I think that you get a sense from this crowd

that you have a second home on the other side of the Atlantic and that good cheer and warmth is fully reciprocated.

So happy St. Patrick's week, everybody. God bless you. May God bless both our countries. Have a wonderful time while you're here. Don't break anything.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his cousin Henry Healy of Moneygall, Ireland, and his mother Mary Healy; Ollie Hayes, owner, Ollie Hayes Bar in Moneygall, Ireland, and his wife Majella; and Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President, and Prime Minister Kenny.

Remarks at the Copper Mountain Solar 1 Facility in Boulder City, Nevada March 21, 2012

The President. Hello, everybody. Good afternoon. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. It is wonderful to be here. Thank you so much. It is great to be in Boulder City.

A couple people I want to thank for their outstanding work. First of all, our Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar, is in the house. He's the guy in the nice-looking hat. Not only does it look good, but it protects his head, because the hair has gotten a little thin up there. *[Laughter]*

Audience member. One is a good-looking guy.

The President. He is a good-looking guy.

Audience member. One of them. One of them.

The President. One of them. *[Laughter]* There—that's right. There's the other guy. *[Laughter]*

I also want to thank your mayor—a big supporter of solar energy—and that's Roger Tober, for being here. Where's Roger? Here he is right there. I just met his beautiful daughter. It's great to see you.

I want to thank Jeffrey Martin, CEO of Sempra, and John and Kevin, who helped just give me this tour.

And Boulder City is the first stop on a tour where I'll be talking about what we're calling

an all-of-the-above energy strategy—all of the above—a strategy that relies on producing more oil and gas here in America, but also more biofuels, more fuel-efficient cars, more wind power, and as you can see, a whole lot more solar power.

This is the largest solar plant of its kind anywhere in the country. That's worth applauding. Every year, you produce enough clean energy to power around 17,000 homes. And that's just the beginning. Things are going so well that another plant is already under construction down the road that will eventually power another 45,000 homes. And a third plant is in development that will be one day able to power around 66,000 homes.

Now, this is an area that was hit hard by the recession, and that's true of the whole State. You guys have been through a lot. But you haven't given up. You looked around at this flat, beautiful land and all this sun—I just—I asked the question, how many days of sun do you get a year—320; that's pretty good—and decided that Boulder City was the perfect place to generate solar power.