

Testimony of Kevin F. O'Malley
Ambassador-Designate to Ireland
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 15, 2014

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am honored to be here today as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Ireland. I would like to publicly express my gratitude to the President and to Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they have shown in me by this nomination. I also thank you and this Committee for considering the nomination.

I am so fortunate to be before you today as an American asked to represent the United States – a country that I love and that has given so much to me – and to represent my country in Ireland – a land and a people that has given so much to us and that so many of us hold so dear. Personally, I trace my Irish roots to my grandparents who came from Westport, County Mayo in the beginning of the 20th century. I have enjoyed discovering the land of my grandparents, crisscrossing Ireland from Dublin to Galway, from Cork to Mayo. There is an unbreakable bond and a deep kinship between the people of United States and the people of Ireland. How did this come to pass? What makes this relationship so very special?

The United States is, of course, a nation of immigrants. From the time of our nation's founding, thousands of Irish men and women came to the new world. This legacy is forged into the very cornerstone of the United States of America. Nine of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were Irish. Six of the 36 delegates to the convention which drafted our Constitution were Irish. An estimated 30 percent of the soldiers in the Revolutionary Army were Irish. These immigrants from Ireland were not just looking for a better life; they were prepared to build one in the new world. From this start, Irish immigrants made contributions to the United States in construction, railroads, and commerce. They contributed to our nation as policemen, firefighters, politicians, educators, as well as winners of Oscars, Emmys, Grammys, Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes.

I learned to love Ireland and all things Irish seated at the feet of my parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Ireland, I learned, was more than just a place – it was a way of life:

Hard work
Spiritual values
Determination, and,
Wit

When Ireland won its independence, the United States was one of the first nations to recognize its status as a country and to send an ambassador. We have been with Ireland and Ireland has been with us ever since.

Ireland is today one of our most reliable allies and stable trading partners. More than \$38 billion of trade passes between United States and Ireland each year, with the United States exporting more than \$6 billion worth of goods to Ireland. I am confident we can build on that. Irish companies employ over 120,000 persons in the United States. Some 700 U.S. firms employ approximately 115,000 people in Ireland. These U.S. companies generate approximately 26 percent of Ireland's GDP. Ireland is one of the largest sources of direct foreign investment in the United States. Last year Forbes Magazine listed Ireland as the best country in the world within which to do business. Trade and investment ties between the United States and Ireland will be further strengthened if we can reach agreement on an ambitious Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

Although always adhering to its neutrality, Ireland is our constant partner in peacekeeping missions throughout the world. Irish troops participate in the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Ireland also sent much-needed troops to the dangerous Golan Heights during the Syrian crisis, when no other developed country answered the call. They also send peacekeepers to places like Lebanon, Mali, Western Sahara, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kosovo.

As a meaningful way to honor the victims of its own famine, Ireland provides nutritional assistance to infants and mothers in Zambia. And recalling its own efforts to emerge from its own economic crisis, Ireland has offered millions of dollars of humanitarian assistance to those suffering in Syria's crisis.

The United States and Ireland face several challenges together. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 ended years of strife and bloodshed to Northern Ireland, but this work is not done. Courageous people were willing to take

the first steps towards peace and reconciliation 16 years ago. While there has been real progress, more must be done to fully devolve government and achieve a vibrant economy and pluralistic, shared society. As President Obama said in his speech to Northern Ireland youth in Belfast last June, the people of Northern Ireland will "have to choose whether to keep going forward." The United States will be there to help.

Another issue affecting the kinship between our two countries is the changing face of Ireland. We must be careful not to rely only upon the historical friendship, but must constantly renew our alliance to keep it healthy and vital. We must continue to build new connections, to and with young American and Irish leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

Today's Ireland, after all, looks very different from the one President John F. Kennedy visited 50 years ago. Among the 28 countries of the European Union, Ireland has the fastest growing population due to both increased immigration and higher birthrates. Approximately 33 percent of the population of Ireland is under the age of 24. One in six people residing in Ireland today was born elsewhere. In just a few years, our fond memories and family ties, although a strong historic foundation for relations, will simply not be enough. The new generation of Irish seeks connections to the United States through business and technology collaboration, music, and the arts, too. As Ireland transforms into a more multicultural society, we must include Irish citizens with ancestry in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the special bonds shared between previous generations. We must, build new bridges to ensure this friendship remains timeless.

I believe that the relationship between United States and Ireland is truly unique -- molded in cultural and family ties, strengthened by trade and commercial successes, and celebrated through politics, music, literature, the arts, and shared concern for peoples beyond our own borders. It is my intention, if confirmed as the United States Ambassador to Ireland, to represent our great country to one of our greatest and closest friends, to broaden and strengthen our bonds, to work for a just and permanent peace, and to increase opportunities for better lives. No American, and particularly no Irish-American, could ask for a more meaningful undertaking.

Thank you for considering this nomination. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.