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Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 1998
March 12, 1998

Warmest greetings to everyone celebrating Saint Patrick's Day. On this day dedicated to Ireland's great patron saint, I join millions of other Americans across our country in remembering with pride the roots of our Irish heritage.

As it has been for so many immigrants, America has always been a beacon of hope for the Irish people. And the Irish people have always been a source of light and energy to keep that beacon shining brightly. They arrived with little. But the Irish did not come to America empty-handed. They brought with them strong arms and an even stronger spirit that would help to build our nation's great canals, bridges, and railroads; that would wrest coal from Pennsylvania's mines and raise the skyscrapers of New York City. They brought with them a love of words that enriched American journalism and literature. They brought a great reverence for education and built schools across the country renowned for their scholarship and social conscience.

Perhaps their greatest gifts to America have been an abiding love of liberty and a patriotic spirit. Irish Americans have served with distinction in every American conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the Persian Gulf, and their keen sense of social justice made them among the first and most effective voices for labor reform. Generations of Irish Americans entered public service to reach out to those in need—to feed the poor, find jobs for the unemployed, fight for racial equality, and champion social reform.

The United States continues to draw strength and vision from our multicultural, multiracial society. As we celebrate Saint Patrick's Day once again, we remember with special pride the gifts of Irish Americans: faith in God, lilt and laughter, love of family and community, and an unswerving commitment to freedom and justice that continues to enrich our nation.

Best wishes to all for a wonderful celebration.

BILL CLINTON

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring Senator Ernest F. Hollings
March 12, 1998

Thank you very much. First of all, on behalf of Senator and Mrs. Hollings, myself, and all the southerners present at this dinner—[*laughter*]—I want to thank Esther Coopersmith for serving okra and cornbread. I don't know what the rest of you thought about it, but I felt good about it. [*Laughter*]

Esther, I thank you for your friendship to me and to Fritz and Peatsy, and for opening your home and bringing your whole family together; especially thank you for Connie, who's done such wonderful work for me.

Don't you love to hear Fritz Hollings talk? You know, one night back in 1985—this is a true story—I was a lowly Governor—[*laughter*]—or as my predecessor said, a Governor of a small Southern State. And I was sitting at home one night, and I decided I would do something responsible, so I flipped on the television, and instead of turning to HBO, I turned to C–SPAN. And it was more entertaining than HBO because it was a roast of Senator Hollings.

One of the speakers was Senator Kennedy, who commented on Senator Hollings' campaign in 1984, and said that he was the first non-English-speaking person ever to serve in the Senate and a great inspiration to non-English-speaking Americans everywhere. [*Laughter*] And every time some of my friends get all upset about these English-only referendums, I thought to myself, you know, if Fritz didn't have to run for reelection, they could send him to California; he could beat it all by himself. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, I'm glad to be here speaking for a man who Strom Thurmond believes is too young to serve the people of South Carolina. [*Laughter*] But I think he's about to get the hang of it.

I also want to say that one of the things—this is serious now—there are several things I