

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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Editor's Note: The President was in Martha's Vineyard, MA, on August 27, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, August 27, 1999

**Remarks at an American Ireland
Fund Dinner in Nantucket,
Massachusetts**

August 20, 1999

Thank you very much. Let me begin by joining others in thanking Bob and Mia for having us in their beautiful, beautiful home and making us all feel at home. I thank Jack and Lyle for their work on the fundraisers and for all the many things they've done for me over many, many years. I thank all the board members of the American Ireland Fund who are here.

And I congratulate you on honoring Tim Russert. You know, most of us who have tried to be professionally Irish—[*laughter*—you know, we get our Irish shtick down, you know. This is about the best I've ever seen. [*Laughter*] And I say it because—it is because it's genuine. You could feel it. You could feel it. His heart was in his remarks. You could see it was yesterday that he was a young man writing that statement for Senator Moynihan.

For the American Irish, which is probably the largest diaspora in the world, the last 30 years of the Troubles have been a source of enormous heartbreak and frustration and sometimes downright disgust—but always, always, love. And I want to thank Tim for his continuing passionate commitment to the principles of peace and equality in Ireland. And I thank you for honoring him.

I also want to thank you more than I can say for honoring Hillary with the proceeds of this fundraiser to Vital Voices. In so many ways in Ireland, we have moved almost in two different worlds in the last 6½ years. And sometimes, I think her world will have more to do with whether peace really takes hold than the one that I have moved in.

The first big decision I had to make was whether to give a visa to Gerry Adams. Remember? [*Applause*] And I was told—here I was, this ardent Anglophile who had spent

2 years in college in England and knew most of the Kings of England in order and all of that sort of stuff, and the Queen—and they said, “Well, if you do this, you will just destroy the special relationship between the United States and Britain.” And I said, “Well, if I don't do it, we're never going to get anybody off the dime over there.”

And so we made it absolutely clear that we would not tolerate terrorism, that this trip could not be used to raise money to buy guns or ammunition, that this was to be a gesture of peace. Well, the rest is history—good, bad, and indifferent, but at least it got us off the dime. And the Irish people have pretty well done the rest. They voted for the Good Friday accords in overwhelming numbers. We had the parliamentary elections following on them. We've had a lot of institutions start.

But let me say that I think one of the things that made all this possible is the American Ireland Fund for the last 20 years. Why? Because all that money you raised and put in there created opportunity after opportunity after opportunity for people, and so they saw there could be a different future.

You know, one of the problems you have if you go into a place like Kosovo now, to get people to quit killing each other and staying in the same old rut—hating people because they're not in their tribe and the way they worship God or their ethnic group—is that they cannot imagine a tomorrow that is different from yesterday and today.

The American Ireland Fund, by just being there, in Ireland and in Northern Ireland for 20 years, you know, the place is booming now, but for most of the last 20 years it was about the poorest country in Europe. And you were there, day-in and day-out, month-in and month-out, year-in and year-out, and I am telling you it made a difference. I know. I've been there. I've been on the streets. I've been in those neighborhoods. I've seen your projects. I've seen the people you've helped.