

year are going to be 20 percent less than projected. Competition works. Trusting people to make the decisions in their lives is the right thing to do. The Medicare modernization plan we passed is good for our seniors, and I'm proud that we're able to get the job done.

We believe in health savings accounts, which puts consumers in charge of their health decisions. We believe in association health plans that enable small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can buy insurance at the same rates and same discounts that big companies are able to do. We believe in information technology to help control the cost. And we believe we've got to do something about these frivolous and junk lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice and running up the cost of medicine for our consumers.

We don't fear the future; we welcome it. And we understand that to make sure this country remains competitive, we've got to stay on the leading edge of technological change. And so therefore, I look forward to working with Congress to double the Federal commitment to the most critical basic research in the physical sciences over the next 10 years. I look forward to working with the United States Congress to make sure the research and development tax credit is a permanent part of our Tax Code. And I look forward to working with the United States Congress to make sure our children have got the skills necessary to become the scientists and engineers and chemists and physicists to keep the jobs of the 21st century right here in the United States of America.

I can stand up here and tell you that we have delivered results for the American people, and we've got an agenda to continue to do so. One of the interesting things about working with these good folks is that they've got a proper perspective of the role of Government in our life as well. The way I like to put it is this: Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. We understand that the great strength of America is not in the size of our military force or in the size of our wallets. The great strength of the United States of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens who

all want to serve something greater than themselves. Ours is a compassionate nation; ours is a loving nation. And we understand the role of Government is not to crowd out our faith-based and community-based institutions but to welcome them in the providing of care and love and compassion for our fellow citizens who hurt.

We believe in ushering in the responsibility era, when our citizens understand they are responsible for the decisions they make in life. If you are a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're a corporate citizen, you're responsible for being a—for putting something back into our culture, and you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders.

If you're a citizen who wants to help change America one heart and one soul at a time, you're responsible for mentoring a child, for feeding the hungry, for providing shelter to the homeless. The great strength of America is the compassion of America. And I look forward to continue to call people to service, to rally that strength so that every single citizen of our country realizes the great promise and the great hope of the blessed land we call home.

It's an honor to be here. I'm proud to be your President. I'm proud to be working with these Members of the United States Congress. I want to thank you for keeping them in power in Washington. The Nation is better off with Denny Hastert as the Speaker and these leaders running the Congress.

God bless, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:12 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia McKeon, wife of Representative Howard P. "Buck" McKeon; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland

March 17, 2006

President Bush. *Taoiseach*, thank you very much. Welcome back.

Prime Minister Ahern. Thank you.

President Bush. Laura and I are delighted to welcome you here to the White House. I'm proud to accept the bowl of shamrocks as a symbol of our friendship.

The friendship between Ireland and the United States has deep roots. Few people fought as hard for American independence as the sons of Erin. At the end of the Revolutionary War, Lord Mountjoy told the House of Commons that, "We've lost America through the Irish." The Irish played a key role in Washington's army. And in the two centuries since, the ties between Ireland and America have only strengthened.

The ties between Ireland and America are reflected in this great house. This house was designed by an Irish architect, and he used as his model the grandest building he knew, Leinster House in Ireland. The affinities between the two buildings are more than just architectural; the White House, built by James Hoban, has been home to every American President since John Q. Adams' father, John. The Dublin building that inspired him now serves as a free parliament in a free and independent Ireland.

The ties between Ireland and America are also reflected in our people. Ireland has one of the fastest growing economies in Europe, and its growth is attracting immigrants. For more than a century, that was a different story. Millions of Irish came to our shores because of war and poverty and famine. Often they arrived with nothing but the faith of their fathers and a willingness to work. These men and women who built our cities were also the soldiers who defended our freedom in every one of our wars. They're the priests and they're the nuns who built a system of parochial schools that provided a decent education for millions of poor immigrants. And they're now doing the same thing for a new generation of African Americans and Latino Americans in our inner cities.

Like Saint Patrick, the Irish in America began their life in their new land as exiles, but came to love it as home. Finally, the ties between Ireland and America are reflected in our common commitment to bring the blessings of liberty to every man and woman and child on this Earth.

In the 20th century, Ireland won its independence and raised up a democracy that of-

fered its people a just and better life. In the 21st century, Ireland is now helping other nations who share the same aspirations for peace and prosperity by fighting hunger and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa, by supporting relief efforts for victims of the tsunami in Asia, and by helping the Afghan people rebuild their lives and their country. Ireland is independent when it comes to foreign policy, but Ireland is not neutral when it comes to the global challenges like hunger and disease and human rights.

Taoiseach, you're making a big contribution to our world, and we appreciate it. The United States appreciates all of Ireland's efforts for peace and freedom. Americans are grateful to our Irish friends, and we are proud of our Irish heritage.

The Census Bureau tells us there are more than 34 million Americans that claim Irish ancestry. On Saint Patrick's Day, I suspect that number jumps a little bit. [Laughter] On this special day, we honor the saint who brought the gospel of peace to the Green Isle, and we count ourselves blessed by the warm friendship between his adopted land and our own.

Thanks for coming. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:31 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, at the Capital Hilton Hotel, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the Gridiron Club dinner.