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TO HQ FROM WASHINGTON  
FOR ASST SEC O HUIGINN FROM AMBASSADOR AND M COLLINS

Mid-term U.S. Elections: Implications for Ireland

1. Many in Washington are still trying to assess the full implications of today's election results. It will of course be well into the New Year before we have a sense of the way in which the new Congress will conduct itself and address the issues on its agenda.
2. While the new Speaker (Newt Gingrich) has no track record or known interest up to now on Irish issues, the new Republican leadership in the House will nonetheless include many good friends who have always been helpful in the past, including Ben Gilman and Henry Hyde who are likely to control the key positions of Chairmen of the House Foreign Affairs and Judiciary Committees, respectively.
3. In the Senate, the situation is somewhat similar. The recent meeting between the Tánaiste and the new Majority Leader, Bob Dole, underlined the bipartisan nature of support for Ireland there. Dole, in his conversation with the Tánaiste, indicated that he expected many changes (i.e. a Republican take-over) in the Senate after the election but helpfully added that "there will be no changes on Ireland". Moreover, his Chief

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of Staff (Sheila Burke) is first generation Irish. In addition, the existing Deputy Leader of the Republican party, Senator Alan Simpson, is a particularly good friend, and has long had an interest in our agenda. He had a detailed and very friendly meeting with the Tánaiste during the latter's September visit, and was subsequently instrumental in ensuring the passage of the Visa Waiver legislation through the Senate.

Speaker Foley

4. For us, the loss of Speaker Foley is undoubtedly to be greatly regretted. Both on a personal level, and as Speaker of the House, he was a great friend of Ireland. He will also be a severe loss to the British Government, with whom he maintained particularly close relations over the years.

Friends of Ireland group

5. The Speaker was, along with Republican Minority leader Bob Michel, honorary Co-Chairman of the Friends of Ireland. The implications of their departures (Michel did not seek re-election) from the Friends will have to be addressed in due course when the new Congress settles down and finds its feet. Some consideration might also be given at that time to the continuing role of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs, including a possible merger between the two organisations. We would need to be sure, however, that the main body of the Friends would welcome a merger before going down this road.
6. The election also saw the defeat of Congressman Frank McCloskey, the Chairman of the Friends. McCloskey held one of the most marginal seats in the country and his defeat was widely expected. It might be noted that McCloskey would shortly have served almost 4 years as Chairman of the Friends and would likely have yielded the Chairmanship, probably around next St Patrick's Day.

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7. The re-election of Senator Kennedy is, of course, of considerable importance given the intensity and depth of his involvement on Irish issues. We can expect the Senator, despite his minority status, to continue to play an active part in support of our agenda, together with the other major Irish Democratic personalities in the Senate, including Senators Leahy, Moynihan, Dodd and Biden.
8. Other good Democratic friends of Ireland on the Hill, including Congressmen Neal, Manton, Joe Kennedy, Moakley, Markey, all retained their seats reasonably easily. Senator Kennedy's son, Patrick, will no doubt also be helpful in the House on the Irish agenda. It goes without saying that all our Republican friends won re-election easily.

Issues ahead

9. The primary legislative issues of a continuing nature for us are Immigration and the International Fund for Ireland. As of now, however, we have no immediate priorities on the Immigration front, given the (very timely) success of the Visa Waiver legislation at the end of the last Congress. However, should issues on this side arise, we are very confident that our Republican friends will once again be helpful. It might be noted in this respect that the Visa Waiver legislation was primarily drafted by the Republican party, who also took the more active role in assuring its eventual passage through both the House and the Senate.
10. Insofar as the IFI is concerned, clearly the loss of the Speaker and the Chairmanship of Dave Obey in the House is unwelcome, particularly in an environment where the Republicans might be tempted to engage in a campaign to cut foreign aid. It is too early to give a clear assessment of this at the moment. However, on the positive side, the IFI

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has never met with significant opposition from within the

11. We will, of course, be working actively to ensure that, when the President proposes \$30 million for fiscal year 1996 in his forthcoming budget to the Congress, this will be received sympathetically by the Republican leadership. (The President's budget will go to the Congress early in the New Year, with consideration by the House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations taking place some time in the Spring). In the Senate likewise, we will obviously have to work to ensure support for the Fund by the likely new Chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, Mitch McConnell, who is expected to take over from Senator Leahy.
12. A visit by IPI Chairman McCarter fairly early in the new Congress to meet the incoming Republican leadership, and to promote the cause of the Fund, might well be useful.

Summary

13. Overall, the following points are particularly relevant to the new situation;
  - the Irish issue is a bipartisan one on Capitol Hill and has always been so. We fully expect this to continue;
  - the Congress will continue to have a considerable number of Members in both parties who have an interest in Irish issues, and who are likely to remain active in support of our agenda;
  - while a change in the leadership of the Friends of Ireland is required in the light of the election defeats of the Speaker and Frank McCloskey, we fully expect the

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Friends to remain active and, as always in the past, on a bipartisan basis;

- the primary policy initiative on Ireland continues to rest with the Administration, especially as a follow-on to the President's recent economic package statement. This will include the forthcoming visit to Ireland of Secretary of Commerce Brown, and the investment conference on Ireland in Philadelphia next April, which the President will host. (The Republican Governor of Massachusetts, Bill Weld, will, as indicated above, also be visiting Ireland with an investment group next month).
- Many Irish-American business people are strongly supportive of the Republican leadership and party. Some indeed, including Bill Flynn, have said privately to me that Corporate Irish America may well carry more influence and weight with the Republican leadership than with its Democratic counterpart. We might add that Corporate Irish America has become in recent years, and perhaps for the first time, very comfortable with, and assertive in support of, the Government's agenda.
- The ethos of the Republican party has changed very considerably over recent elections. The old WASP approach and attitudes are now very considerably diminished, reflecting to a significant degree the substantial support the party now receives from Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans and other mainstream groups.
- We will have an important opportunity in the early months of the new Congress, and in the lead-up to St Patrick's Day, to consolidate and promote our relationship with the new leadership in the Congress.



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- To sum up, we will of course need to refocus our efforts to some degree in the light of the changed circumstances in Congress, especially in relation to the new Chairpersons of key Committees. In this regard, we will do everything possible to ensure that the Government's agenda will continue to receive the required degree of support and priority on a bipartisan basis, as it has over the years, and we are naturally hopeful that this will be achievable.

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