

March 2010

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Dear Noreen,

The continued gridlock in Washington DC is causing major concern about the likelihood of passing comprehensive immigration reform this year. Change is long overdue yet our congressional representatives on both sides of the isle continue to prevaricate.

The Reform Immigration for America Campaign has undertaken unprecedented organizing all around the country to let lawmakers know that their constituents want immigration reform. On March 21 there will be a major rally in Washington DC. It is expected that ten of thousands of immigrants will participate.

March is the month where we remember our Irish heritage and immigrant roots. I hope that as we celebrate we will also take time to remember and take action to help those from Ireland and beyond who are condemned to live in the shadows.

Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig,
Sheila

Immigration Reform

There is an ever narrowing window for Congress to pass fair immigration reform prior to the mid term elections. Senators Schumer (D-NY) and Graham (R-SC) continue to work on the content of legislation. The latest word is that they have settled on a national biometric identification card that all American workers would eventually be required to obtain. Check out the [Wall Street Journal](#) article on this.

Little progress has been made since last fall on immigration reform and advocates, who have become increasingly frustrated with the lack of action, have called for a major mobilization in Washington DC. Leaders of the march will be talking to the White House this week and are hopeful that the rally will jump start the campaign for reform.

The **"We March for America" rally in DC on March 21st** is gaining major momentum with tens of thousands of immigrants expected from all over the country. Irish immigrants from the Irish Centers/groups in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and New York are organizing to make sure that the Irish immigrant community is represented. Contact your local [Irish Center](#) to see if they are organizing transportation.

In a hard hitting piece in last Friday's Washington Post Josh Hoyt, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights talks about the disappointment in the Latino community at the lack of progress on immigration reform. A sentiment that, I believe, is echoed in the Irish community. [Obama risks alienating Latino's with lack of immigration reform](#)

What Can You Do?

- 1.** Reach out to your local [Irish Center](#) to find out what is happening in your community.
- 2.** Go to the [We March for America: Change Takes Courage website](#) for more information on the rally
- 3.** Send a "[Justice for Immigrants](#)" postcard to Congress
- 4.** Join Faith communities who are rallying for a just solution for immigrants via their [March for America](#)
- 5.** Endorse the [Campaign to Reform Immigration For America](#)

News from Irish Centers

The [Emerald Isle Immigration Center](#) in New York is hosting two Public Information Seminars where their attorney,

immigration counselor and a private accountant will be available to provide free information and answers to your immigration and tax filing questions.

Get the details about [Celebrating Citizenship](#) in Philadelphia as well as Minister Mary Hanafin's visit and the many other exciting events being organized by the Irish Immigration Center of Philadelphia.

The [Irish Pastoral Centre in Boston](#) is hosting acclaimed photographer [John Minihan](#) who is working with the [Irish Arts Center in New York](#) to expand their exhibit "To Love Two Countries" to New England. This is a tribute to the Irish who came to the United States in the early twentieth century.

The [Irish Immigrant Support Group](#) in Seattle, Washington is organizing a special St. Patrick's Day lunch for Irish seniors at F X McRory's. Please make reservations by emailing jkeane@irishclub.org or call 425-290-7839

The [Irish Immigration Center](#) in Boston are hosting a free health screening on St. Patrick's Day at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. They will do routine checks and provide answers to health care and health insurance questions. Contact 617-542-7654 ext 14 for more information.

San Francisco [Irish Immigration Pastoral Center](#) is hosting a special Mass and luncheon with Irish music and song for Senior Citizens for St Patrick's Day. Contact IIPC at 415-752-6006 if you would like to attend.

Jack L will perform at Rory Dolan's on Tuesday, March 16th @ 9:00pm the proceeds will benefit programs and mental health services provided by the [Aisling Irish Community Center](#). Jack L is involved with Console, an Irish charity that helps people bereaved through suicide. Contact (914) 237-5121 for more information.

Crisis in Haiti

In response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti on January 12th USCS announced that they would grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Haitians in the U.S. since January 12. The Irish Community in New York, Philadelphia and Boston has extended offers of help to those seeking to file petitions. For assistance please contact:

[Emerald Isle Immigration Center](#)
[Irish Immigration Center of Philadelphia](#)
[Irish Pastoral Center, Boston](#)
[Irish Immigration Center Boston](#)

Detention & Deportation

Recent removal statistics for Ireland indicate what we already suspected. The number of deportations of Irish immigrants continues to increase. The total number of immigrants deported to Ireland in FY2008 was 91 in FY2009 this increased to 118. The numbers listed in the category "criminal" remains static at 19. The number without criminal issues increased from 72 in 2008 to 99 in 2009.

CIIC member groups continue to visit detainees and are working hard to ensure that immigrant rights are protected when they are detained by ICE. Last month CIIC Detention Rights Working Group members had a video conference with all the Irish Vice Consuls to highlight the current conditions and problems and to develop strategies to improve the situation for Irish immigrants.

We are also participating in a national training by the Detention Watch Network that will help members to understand the complexities of the detention system and learn more about how we can get justice and fair treatment for immigrants who are detained by ICE.

Irish Citizens Refused Social Welfare

The CIIC has long been concerned that the current social welfare rules regarding residency are resulting in denial of social welfare benefits to immigrants who return from the United States.

Recent reports indicate that this, Habitual Residency Requirement or HRC is indeed resulting in the denial of benefits to returning Irish immigrants. The [Irish Times](#) and the [Irish Examiner](#) recently reported that the number of Irish citizens who were refused payments because they failed to satisfy residency requirements increased by almost 75% last year.

Currently applicants who have lived in the US (or anywhere outside the Common Travel Area) for the previous two years or more will have to show documentary evidence that Ireland is now their "center of interest." It is important to be aware that there is a presumption that the applicant is **not habitually resident** in Ireland at the time of making the application until the contrary is shown by him or her.

This is a major concern to Irish Centers here because their

clients who are undocumented here do not have the option of returning to the US if they have no means of support at home. While the increase in the refusal rate in 2009 may be the result of the Government's attempt to crack down on welfare fraud it is unconscionable to deny basic benefits to returning citizens. Thanks to [Crosscare Migrant Project](#) in Dublin who continue to monitor this issue.

If you are an Irish citizen who is intending to return home after living here for 2 years or more be sure to check out our [blog](#) to get the facts before you leave. Contact your local [Irish Center](#) for more information. [Crosscare](#) is also an excellent resource for anyone thinking of returning to Ireland.

RTÉ Programs - Catch Up Online

Good news for immigrants who want to keep up with news from home. RTÉ programs are now available on line via a recently launched comprehensive international online TV. Check it out at www.rte.ie/player

Programs available include news and current affairs programming, flagship entertainment programming, documentaries and a range of arts and music programming.

The 2010 Census Begins

Over the next few days households all over the US will receive their census forms in the mail. It is very important for everyone to complete and return these forms. The Justice Department issued welcome clarification recently on the issue of the confidentiality of census data. They said that no provision of the Patriot Act overrides the confidentiality law that protects census data. The legal information provided will not be shared with any other agency, at the local, state, or federal level.

It is important for everyone to complete and return their census forms. More information is available on the [Census 2010 website](#).

Seniors Connect

If you are an Irish Senior and you would like to connect, via the phone, with someone from Ireland for a chat or to discuss an issue call the toll free number 1-877-997-5777. The [Senior Connect](#) program is free, easy to access and completely confidential. It is a project of the Emerald Isle Immigration Center, the New York Irish Center and the Aisling Irish Community Center and is funded by the Government's

Emigrant Support Program.

Sheila Gleeson
Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers

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