

Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers Newsletter

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Greetings!

Happy New Year! Welcome to the January 2013 edition of the CIIC Newsletter.

As evidenced by our first newsletter of this year, it is going to be an exciting time of advocacy, collaboration and information sharing.

Please remember to keep me informed about your member center or organization, so we can share your news and achievements with the community. I would encourage you to share this newsletter and our other e-communications with your friends and colleagues by using the link at the bottom of this page.

Best,

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Illinois Makes History!

Drivers Licenses Law Passed for Undocumented

Submitted by Breandan G. Magee, Executive Director CIIS

The Illinois House of Representatives made history Tuesday, January 8th as it voted 65 to 46 to approve a temporary visitors driver's license (TVDL) SB 957 for the undocumented. The Senate had voted last month to approve the bill by 41 to 14, with one abstention. Illinois is the 5th state in the nation after Tennessee, New Mexico, Washington and Utah to approve such a measure but the only one in recent times to make such a bold move. The bill's passage has been hailed by immigrant advocates as a milestone for Illinois and a measure of things to come for comprehensive immigration reform in Washington D.C. Other states may take Illinois' lead and follow.

Chicago Irish Immigrant Support (CIIS) Executive Director Breandan Magee was in the chamber for the count and had this to say, " This vote is historic in its reach and is a bell weather for national sentiment on immigration reform and immigrants' rights. The tide is turning and Americans of all political persuasions see this as a fight for human rights. I am very hopeful looking forward to immigration reform at the national level but today Illinois just made its roads safer and offers the 250,000 undocumented immigrants driving on our roads the chance to get a license and become insured".

The bipartisan bill's passage was the result of a long campaign that kicked off in the summer, led by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). ICIRR is an umbrella group of over 130 agencies in Illinois that advocate for immigrants' rights; it counts CIIS and the Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform as long standing members.

The Irish voice was a loud one in this debate with CIIS and Billy Lawless of the Chicago Celts fielding members for days of action in Springfield and participating in mass call ins to press legislators to back the measure. CIIS Board President Cyril Regan and Executive Director Breandan Magee spent the last 2 days before the vote in Springfield with a contingent of grassroots supporters from ICIRR to make the final case to lawmakers that the bill was good for Illinois and for road safety in general.

The vote however was still undecided just before the House convened, with key legislators still unsure as to how they would cast their vote. Representative Fred Crespo was one such lawmaker who was a definite no before the crucial vote. Regan and Magee accompanied Fr. Brendan Curran of St. Pius Parish Chicago to the representative's office with only five minutes to sway him before he rushed off to the final session of the 97th Congress. It turned out that Crespo, the son of a Puerto Rican Korean War veteran had been born, baptized and confirmed in St Pius's and he graciously listened to the three Irishmen plead the case for the bill. The bill's passage would have direct impact on the over 5000 undocumented Irish men and women in Chicagoland and has stringent controls in place to avoid document fraud.

From the floor of the House an emotive Crespo acknowledged the visit of Fr. Curran and the Irish and thanked them for their passion on the issue. In the end he voted with his conscience and voted yes. Another representative that the trio visited in the eleventh hour was Emily McAsey who had been a no on this issue and had voted consistently against pro immigrant measures in previous votes. She also listened intently and had questions answered. She had been visibly emotional in previous meetings in her district when undocumented immigrants told their stories of parents deported after being pulled over for a traffic violation. Representative McAsey also voted yes.

In total 65 lawmakers voted yes after listening to the impassioned debate on the House floor from those opposed and those in favor of the initiative. Over 400,000 immigrants are deported annually and many such removals are triggered by a routine traffic stop. Anyone apprehended while driving

without a license may be booked and brought back to the station where Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can put a hold on him/her and begin the deportation process. Families are torn apart and as one advocate put it " we are creating orphans with parents" as US citizen children remain here while one or more of their parents are sent back to their country of origin.

Back in the chamber a gasp of disbelief and elation rang out from the packed public galleries as the final vote flashed up on the electronic screen. Everyone in the chamber knew that history had just been made and the tears followed amid the beaming smiles. It was a highly charged crescendo to a long fought campaign for the bill's ardent supporters.

Immigrant advocates in Illinois had been fighting for this measure for over 13 years; the last time that this proposal came up for a vote in 2007 it was defeated by a handful of votes in the House. This time around a strong campaign led by ICIRR and key Irish community leaders built a coalition of supporters who persuaded many legislators to vote in favor. Key proponents of the bill included Senate President John Cullerton, Representative Eddie Acevedo, Speaker Michael Madigan, House Minority Leader Tom Cross, Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno, the Latino Caucus, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Governor Pat Quinn, Former Governor Jim Edgar, Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court Dorothy Brown, Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran and Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart.

This formidable coalition was strengthened by the support of the teachers unions, hospital associations, the labor unions, chambers of commerce, the state police association and the 130 member agencies of ICIRR.

The bill allows any immigrant in Illinois to secure a temporary visitors' driver's license if he or she can provide proof of residency in Illinois for the last year, a valid passport or consular ID and pass all road tests. The license will cost \$30 but will appear somewhat different to the regular IL driver's license; they will be colored purple as opposed to the red of regular licenses. The TVDL already exists for foreign nationals who are here on student visas or temporary work visas. It will not be valid for proof of identity to board a plane or enter a federal building and will be marked "not valid for identification". It can however be used as a bond card in the event that the holder is pulled over by a police officer and given that it is the same TVDL available to foreign students and visa holders law enforcement cannot assume that the holder is undocumented.

The Secretary of State estimates that the new licenses move will cost \$800,000 in its first year but even if only 30,000 of the estimated 250,000 undocumented drivers apply and pay the \$30 fee, the initiative will be revenue neutral and may even turn a profit. This was a key provision for many lawmakers concerned about the dire fiscal problems faced by the state of Illinois.

Supporters of this bill took a moment to savor its passage but in true form those committed to immigration reform met just two days after the vote to

chart the course ahead for a federal bill to legalize the estimated 12 million undocumented workers in our country. CIIS Board Chairman and Executive Director Breandan Magee were again among those present to declare 2013 as the year that Congress acts.

Magee said, " Be prepared in this session of Congress to see the same momentum build as in 2007 with large marches here in Chicago and in Washington DC .. the President has stated that immigration reform will be his top priority after the fiscal cliff and we are ready to mobilize and support him in that endeavor."

The stage has now been set with Illinois' historic passage of SB 957 and with Republicans in the US Congress mouthing words of compromise on immigration reform, after an unprecedented Latino voter turn-out in favor of Democrats and their pro immigrant platform, signs are good. The Irish have been center stage in this debate as it has raged throughout the years and they will continue to punch above their weight to do, as Organizer Rebecca Shi of ICIRR said, " whatever it takes".

That fighting Irish spirit and Celtic tenacity has brought generations of Irish immigrants to these shores in search of a better life and today's generation deserve no less a chance at the American dream. Today Irish proponents of immigration reform stand shoulder to shoulder with all immigrants in the melting pot spirit that defines what it means to be American. Times and politics may change but that exceptional-ism of America and her ideals never does and SB 957 goes a long way to proving it.

For more information about Chicago Irish Immigrant Support, please [click here](#).



IL Secretary of State Jesse White with CIIS Board President, Cyril Regan, and CIIS Executive Director, Brendan Magee, right after the historic vote in Springfield

Tánaiste Speaks on E-3 and Immigration Reform

Submitted by the Embassy of Ireland-USA

Last month, the Tánaiste and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, responded to a Parliamentary Question regarding the progress of the introduction of the E-3 Visa, as well as prospects for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States, as follows:

"The outcome of the recent US Presidential election would appear to have advanced the prospects for the necessary reform of US immigration systems and procedures that would help improve the situation of undocumented Irish immigrants in the United States.

Much further debate and discussion is likely to be required

within the US political system as to what such reform might comprise. Through our Embassy in Washington and in close liaison with Irish-American community representatives, our contacts with the US Administration and Congress will intensify even further over the coming weeks and months with a view to ensuring that the interests and concerns of undocumented Irish immigrants are fully reflected in any future legislative deal that emerges in this area. A resolution of the situation for undocumented Irish migrants in the US will also continue to be pursued by myself and the Taoiseach at every suitable opportunity. Most recently, I discussed the issue of E-3 visas and comprehensive immigration reform with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during her visit to Dublin."

To keep abreast of information coming from the Embassy of Ireland in the USA, please click here to view their [website](#), or follow them on Twitter: @IrelandEmbUSA.

DFA 2013 Grant Round Opens

The 2013 DFA Emigrant Support Programme grant round is now open, until 20th February. Applications can be submitted at the following link: <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=292>

Information about the ESP can be found at the link above, and the additional points below were forwarded by the Embassy:

- In advance of applying, organisations must register for a username and password, even if the organisation has a username and password from previous years.
- Organisations should read all the relevant documentation (on the above webpage) prior to making an application.
- Capital Funding: Organisations may apply for funding to support capital investment in their premises. In general, such applications must be supported by a clear project plan and budget and organisations must be able

to demonstrate that a significant portion of the cost of the project has been/can be raised from sources other than the ESP. Applications for capital funding should also include three quotations for the proposed work.

- All ESP support is for a given year only and with no guarantee of any future funding. It is inadvisable for organisations to be fully reliant on ESP funding.
- The online application form requests applicants to give a detailed breakdown of costs associated with a project. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible. A breakdown of costs enables us to make decisions on partial funding of the project rather than a complete refusal due to some elements being ineligible for funding.
- Irish government funding is intended to facilitate access to mainstream funding rather than be the sole source of funding. Organisations may wish to implement a fundraising strategy that maximises their access to available funds, statutory or otherwise.
- Unless expressly approved in writing, grants can only be spent for the purposes for which it is approved. In the case of unspent grants, the policy of the Irish Abroad Unit is to seek a refund unless a strong case for an extension is made by the applicant.

Rev. Michael Leonard Visits Seattle Irish Immigration Support Group



Fr. Michael Leonard, Chaplain at Chicago Irish Immigrant Support (CIIS) and Irish Apostolate USA (IAUSA) Board Member, travelled to Seattle this past December and met with John Keane of the Seattle Irish Immigrant Support Group (SIISG). This visit by Fr. Leonard is part of an initiative by the IAUSA, which encourages visits by its Chaplains to other IIPC's or Outreach Networks across the United States. These visits are meant

to support and enhance the relationship between the IAUSA as a national organization and the local centers' outreach to Irish immigrants. John Keane stated, "SIISG was happy to welcome Fr. Michael to our center, and look forward to our continued work with IAUSA and their Chaplains."

The visit allowed for discussion regarding SIISG's senior programming. SIISG holds regular senior luncheons and facilitates the sending of newsletters via post and email to and for the Irish Seniors living in the Seattle area. This outreach allows the seniors to keep in contact with the center and abreast of what is happening in the Irish community. SIISG also coordinates mass for the seniors, when possible, in collaboration with IAUSA and the pastoral services of Fr. John Madigan of Holy Rosary Church in Seattle.

Geri Garvey, Administrator at IAUSA, indicated "IAUSA feels it is important to continuously strengthen the relationships we have with the local Irish organizations in order to assist them in providing and expanding their pastoral services to Irish immigrants in their communities. "

The SIISG supports Irish immigrants in Western Washington who need assistance of any kind, whether because of drug or alcohol abuse, spousal abuse, work problems, family issues, visa problems, problems with the INS or the Police. Free advice and referral assistance are available by calling Toll-Free 1-877-517-3559 or by emailing SIISG@irish.club.org. For more information, also check out the SIISG by [clicking here](#).

For more information about the Irish Apostolate USA, [click here](#).



Calling All Seniors

Have You Made the Irish Senior Connect?

All of us at the Irish Senior Connect Listening Line hope that you have had wonderful holidays! Are you looking for someone to talk to? Are you trying to connect with Irish events and activities for seniors that are happening in your area in 2013? If so, give us a call.

Irish Senior Connect is a confidential listening and information service run by the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers (CIIC) and hosted by the Irish Pastoral Centre in Dorchester. Our trained volunteers, many of whom are seniors themselves, are available to take your calls on Monday, Tuesday

and Thursday from 10 am to noon, and on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 2pm to 4pm. We're here to listen about how you are feeling, how your day is going, or hear about anything you might like to discuss. If you need information about social events in the Irish community or services available in the local area we can provide you with options to choose from or direct you to the local Irish Center in your region.

No person should feel alone or isolated. If you feel this way, please call our supportive network at Irish Senior Connect, where friends are here to listen to you and provide you with support. If you have a friend or family member who might benefit from giving us a call, please pass along our contact information. Please call us to say hello, have a chat, ask for event or services information, or to find out more about Irish Senior Connect, the listening line. Our volunteers are waiting to hear from you, and to listen!

The Irish Senior Connect phone number is 855.249.5146.

For more information about the program, contact ISC Program Coordinator, Susan Doody, at susan.doody@ciic-usa.org.



CIIC News

CIIC wants to extend many congratulations to Celine Kennelly, Vice President of the CIIC Board, on her recent marriage to Joe O'Brien. We wish you only happiness in your life together.

ABOUT THE COALITION OF IRISH IMMIGRATION CENTERS

The Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers (CIIC) is a national umbrella group for all of the Irish Immigration Centers in the US. The CIIC was established in 1996 to promote the welfare of Irish immigrants in the US at a national level.

The mission of the CIIC is to represent immigrant organizations throughout the United States who are committed to providing services to Irish immigrants. The Coalition provides support and assistance to the various centers in their work through advocacy, education and the exchange of information. CIIC member organizations are located in California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Wisconsin.

To learn more about CIIC visit, www.ciic-usa.org

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