

Why I'm Wide Awake for 'Sleepy Joe'

By Brian O'Dwyer

This year Americans will be called upon to vote in perhaps the most important presidential election since 1932.

As an American the choice is clear, as an Irish American the case is overwhelming.

I am going to vote for my fellow Irish American Joe Biden.

Joe Biden traces his roots to Counties Mayo and Louth and as vice president he journeyed "home" in 2016 to visit his many relations who still live there.

Of course that is not a reason to vote for him, although the pride I feel to have the first Irish Catholic elected to office since John Kennedy defeated the no nothing bigots in 1960 cannot be discounted.

Joe Biden grew up in a middle class Irish American house in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It was there that he learned the qualities that I believe will make him a great president, a believer in justice, a fighter for the underdog, a belief that we are judged in the end not on what we say, but what we do.

As a descendent of immigrants Biden understands that immigration, including Irish immigration, is the lifeblood of America.

For too many years now, on the basis of discriminatory immigration laws, the Irish who sought a better life in this country, as my father and grandparents once did, have been consigned to being undocumented.

Our community was never really aware how many undocumented were in our midst until the recent pandemic erupted.

Knowing that the undocumented were not eligible for the relief afforded to those laid off due to the virus, members of our community, in what was a Herculean effort called the Slainte project, raised funds to come to their aid.

The community was shocked at the sheer numbers of those who were desperate for assistance. Joe Biden understands their plight and will seek comprehensive immigration reform that will take our Irish immigrant brothers and sisters out of the shadows.

American Business has long been in favor of Irish immigration, a migration that has proved beneficial to both nations.

Specialized visas allow temporary immigration for the most highly educated and skilled workers. The interchange of



Vice President Biden greets a young Irish fan. ROLLINGNEWS.IE PHOTO.



Biden was warmly received during his Irish visit. ROLLINGNEWS.IE PHOTO.

ideas and people has promoted the ties that bind both countries. The present administration has eliminated those visas. Joe Biden will restore them.

Irish America can be justifiably proud of its work in bringing an end to the Troubles and peace to Northern Ireland. But peace in the North remains a fragile commodity.

Peace requires continued American involvement. Joe Biden will appoint a Special Envoy for Northern Ireland and will provide funding for the International Fund for Ireland to advance the reconciliation of all communities in the North.

Significantly, the greater threat to peace will come in the near future with the finalization of Brexit.

As a result of the British withdrawal from the EU the reimposition of a hard border between the Republic and Northern Ireland is a dangerous possibility.

This would abrogate the Good Friday agreement and reignite the passions that once surrounded the border.

Joe Biden has joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richie Neal in making it crystal clear that no U.S. trade deal with Britain will be consummated unless all the guarantees of the Good Friday agreement are preserved.

The present administration has made

no such commitment.

Like many in the community, I was looking forward to visiting the West of Ireland this year. My extended family of cousins from around the Irish diaspora had gathered in New York to march with me in last year's Saint Patrick's Day Parade.

The descendants of Patrick O'Dwyer and Brigid McNicolas from eight months to eighty years old had planned a massive reunion for the first week of August, that being this week.

We all understood the importance of renewing our commitment to our heritage and bringing that commitment to the next generation. This year we had to cancel this long anticipated reunion.

Ireland, understandably, has restricted the arrival of U.S. citizens due to the continuing and expanding outbreak of Covid 19 in the United States.

All of us, Irish American or not, are concerned with the lack of jobs and opportunity that exists in the United States today.

There is a real need to put all Americans back to work, and to remedy the tremendous economic inequality present in our society.

Joe Biden will promote an infrastructure plan that will promote meaningful jobs for the millions who are presently unemployed.

Joe Biden's ancestors left their native Ireland and made the same heart wrenching and perilous journey that confronted so many of their fellow Irish.

They fought for the American Dream and were able to see that dream fulfilled by having one of their own go on to be at the Vice President of the United States, and now to be a candidate for the highest office in the land.

In the spirit of those who came in steerage class to our shores, Joe Biden will fight to fulfill that dream for all Americans, and just as John Kennedy sixty years ago, will stand as a source of great pride for the Irish American community.

On election day in November, I will proudly cast my ballot for Joe Biden.

Brian O'Dwyer is an attorney, immigration activist, and is co-chair of the Irish American Democrats lobby group. He was Grand Marshal of the 2019 New York St. Patrick's Day Parade.



As is always the case in Ireland, a good walk is always in the plan. ROLLINGNEWS.IE PHOTO.



During his visit to Ireland in 2016 Vice President Biden visited the resting place of one of his Irish ancestral families. ROLLINGNEWS.IE PHOTO