

September 2011

Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers Newsletter

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Dear Maurice,

Welcome to September's edition of the CIIC newsletter. What a busy month September turned out to be for the Coalition. There was a lot of activity around the various sub-committees and then of course there was An Tánaiste's visit which proved a great success. Full details are included in this month's newsletter.

Because of this, there will be no featured center this month but we promise to resume next month with San Francisco IIPC

There is an article in this month's newsletter about the actions of Cook County in Chicago in response to ICE's Secure Communities. It will be interesting to see if other Counties across the country will take their lead.

The feature on Fáilte 32 and their new fund to help IWT J-1 visa holders network within the Irish community is well worth considering. It is hoped that it is something that will draw a lot of interest and participation by IWT J-1 Visa Holders.

News from the Coordinator Katie Fox

Phew! What a busy month (and it's not over yet). The return of most from vacation and the resumed work of all of the sub-committees made for an accelerated work-load growth over the past month. An Tánaiste's visit was then thrown in for good measure to ensure I stayed on my toes!!

Having said that, after working in a perceived vacuum in August it was nice to have people around off which to bounce ideas, get feedback etc. The meeting with An Tánaiste was very positive and I feel that the Coalition really exhibited its professionalism and left An Tánaiste in no doubt about the invaluable work that is being done on the ground by all of the centers and the commitment of those involved.

In terms of the sub-committees this month, some of my work included:

- Convening the Detention Sub-committee meeting The two page Detention Handbook for Centers has been drafted and will be ready for circulation following a final edit. The Prison Visitation Guidelines will be ready for finalization at the next meeting. A decision on how a Prison Visitation Program will be rolled out and is for discussion at the next meeting
- Working with the J1 Sub-committee on progressing some of the issues highlighted in previous meetings including - combating the negative press regarding J1 visa holders with accommodation providers & employers, ensuring better orientation of our Irish students before they come to the U.S. and working with the sponsoring bodies in Ireland to ensure a good partnership with the Immigration Centers here
- Ensuring the approval of training and the rolling out of the Outcome Measures Initiative with the Boston Centers on Social Services and with Chicago and EIIC on Immigration
- Finalizing the Request for Proposals and Budget for the Senior Helpline and then circulating it to the member centers. It is hoped that interested Centers will get their Proposals back before the 5th of October and a decision will be made soon thereafter
- Convening the Fundraising sub-Committee. It was agreed that the full Board should attend the initial meeting to prioritize areas for funding and suggest an overall fundraising target
- Circulating the Draft Fiscal Policies and Procedures for comment by the Board and drafting a budget for the next fiscal year. Approval will be sought from the Board regarding our fiscal year change to bring it in line with Department of Foreign Affairs funding.

There was a large degree of preparation for An Tánaiste's visit which ensured a cohesive and productive meeting with him. The CIIC were clear on the issues it wanted highlighted and what it was asking of An Tánaiste. This preparation made for a very successful meeting.

All in all, September proved to not only be a busy month, but a very productive one.

Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers meet with An Tánaiste & Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eamon Gilmore

While in New York on U.N. business, An Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Eamon Gilmore graciously took time out of his busy schedule to meet with the Coalition of Irish Immigration

Centers to discuss the work of the member centers and the issues and concerns facing the Irish diaspora in the United States.

The Coalition highlighted the many issues faced by its member centers on a daily basis and presented on the various services provided by them to the Irish Community including immigration advice & support and social services. An Tánaiste showed an active interest asking pertinent and thought provoking questions throughout.

Immigration to the United States, the difficulties faced by the undocumented Irish and the need for future flow from Ireland led to a focused discussion. With Comprehensive Immigration Reform not on the cards for the foreseeable future, the Coalition asked An Tánaiste for his continued support for both CIR and a solution to address future flow. An Tánaiste is well aware of the issues and stated it as an ongoing discussion point between the Irish and American administrations.

CIIC President Siobhan Dennehy highlighted some the issues that arise from lack of immigration status - "Lack of immigration status is the basis for most of the workload of the Irish Centers across the country. Undocumented Irish immigrants suffer many social issues as a result of living life in the shadows including depression, drug & alcohol abuse, family issues,

Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers meet with
An Tánaiste, Mr. Eamon Gilmore, in NY
September 2011

detentions, deportations and long-term imprisonment. The CIIC appreciates the Irish government's continued support of the services provided by our member centers to the undocumented Irish and the government's continued work on their behalf."

The meeting was energetic and productive and the Coalition is grateful to An Tánaiste for his willingness to meet with them. It

shows recognition by him for the important work being done by the centers in servicing the Irish Community in the U.S.

The meeting ended on a positive note and the Coalition is hopeful, economic climate withstanding, that An Tánaiste and the Department of Foreign Affairs will continue to fund and support the Coalition and its member centers as they continue to play an important role in the Irish Community here in the U.S.

Chicago Immigration Success

Cook County, the most populous county in the nation and home to the City of big shoulders, Chicago, passed a historic pro-immigrant ordinance on Wednesday September 7th. The Cook County Board voted 10-5 to pass a simple, well-reasoned ordinance on immigration after hearing the arguments of the Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrants and Refugee Rights (ICIRR).

The ordinance requires the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to reimburse the County if it wants to hold people in county jails longer than local law allows. This is a historic victory for Cook County taxpayers, the rule of the law, and public safety. It will save the county \$15 million annually in a time of budget crisis in Illinois. It also means that people arrested for minor traffic incidents will no longer be held for ICE and heralds a victory for immigrant families who are still being separated by ICE in record numbers. It should be noted though that the ordinance relies on 5 separate safeguards to ensure no dangerous criminal is released.

Chicago has lead the way nationally on pro-immigrant issues, being the first city to draw over half a million immigrant advocates on to the street in a march calling for comprehensive immigration reform in 2006. This march encouraged other cities to follow suit and also set the scene for Chicago's famous politics to turn to immigration issues. The Chicago Celts for Immigration Reform have been at the forefront of moves to promote immigrant friendly policies and changes in legislation that respect our nation's rich immigrant history.

In addition to the Cook County ordinance, Illinois's Governor Pat Quinn recently withdrew from Immigration and Custom Enforcement's (ICE) Secure Communities program. The program would have seen state police collaborate with ICE to remove immigrants arrested by local authorities.

Quinn stated that Secure Communities was not on target with its mandate of identifying individuals who have been "convicted" of "serious criminal offenses," adding that in Illinois "more than 30 percent of those deported from the United States, under the

program, have never been convicted of any crime" based on federal statistical data compiled through Feb. 28, 2011.

The governors of Massachusetts and New York quickly followed Illinois's lead and withdrew their states from Secure Communities. However, as expected, anti-immigrant forces have already begun their backlash. The Sun-Times published a misleading article, falsely claiming that felons will not be handed over to ICE.

Anti-immigrant phone calls are coming in more than 2 to 1 in Commissioners' offices.

Breandán Magee, Executive Director of Chicago Irish Immigrant Support added, "The truth is that in addition to saving taxpayer dollars and defending the U.S. Constitution this bill restores faith between immigrant communities and the police. Chicago is setting a precedent that we hope can be replicated nationally; clearly the immigration debate has stalled on the national stage so we must take the fight to the state and local level".

Much work remains to be done if immigration reform is to be achieved federally but Chicago is holding the course and making a big difference on the ground. Let's hope that progressive legislative moves from states like Illinois surpass the negative Arizona style laws that have put the cause back decades

Fáilte 32

An Initiative for New Irish Arrivals in New York

Fáilte 32 is an initiative set up last year to help new arrivals from Ireland find employment in New York. It is hoped that by connecting them to all the influential Irish organizations in New York City it will put these new arrivals in front of potential employers and increase their chances of finding viable employment in the U.S.

Fáilte 32 recently launched the Shamrock Fund SM to further its goal of actively connecting visa holders with Irish networks in the U.S.

The Fund will subsidize (or fully pay) the membership of IWT J-1 visa holders to influential Irish American business and cultural organizations in the U.S. Criteria for eligibility includes how long one has been seeking employment in the U.S., and insists on a firm commitment from the IWT J1 visa holder to make full use of their membership by attending all of the organization's events, and proactively networking and volunteering for committees.

The fund will have ZERO administrative costs i.e. the Fund has no paid employees, hence all of the hard earned donations will be fully allocated to supporting those in need. Over time, the organizers plan to expand the purpose of the Fund to include supporting other worthy causes, while always keeping administrative costs at zero.

One of the co-founders of Failte 32, Maurice Landers stated

"We have to make sure that we support the next generation of Irish business leaders by ensuring that our graduates gain valuable experience here in the U.S. which they can then bring back to Ireland to help put it back on track again as one of the most successful economies in Europe."

Four influential Irish organizations have already offered eligible candidates a special membership rate:

Irish Business Organization - www.IBO-NY.com

Irish International Business Network - www.IIBN.com

Irish Network-NYC - www.IrishNetwork-NYC.com

Irish Technology Leadership Group - www.ITLG.org

By reducing the membership rate, the above organizations, not only will provide great networking opportunities, but will also help the Shamrock Fund SM serve more eligible candidates, possibly paying their annual dues to more than one business or cultural organization.

Applications are currently being accepted from IWT J-1 visa holders in the New York area with Science, Engineering, Arts/History and Law qualifications.

Interested candidates should submit their request via the contact section on www.failte32.org and indicate; how long they have been seeking employment in the U.S; their field of study; and how they plan to utilize their membership.

The Fund will match suitable candidates with relevant organizations in New York to increase their chances of employment by providing networking opportunities with potential employers. The Fund started reviewing applications this month, and has already sponsored two IWT J-1 visa holders. Caro Kinsella is **Failte 32's** immigration attorney and she has been assisting them in this process.

Mr Landers added that An Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister), Mr. Enda Kenny, T.D., was recently quoted at a Galway Chamber of Commerce luncheon back in Ireland as saying

"We all need to pull together, we have a lot to offer and a lot going for ourselves"

Fáilte 32 are certainly fulfilling that need in New York in assisting our new graduates to display what they have to offer to potential employers here in the United States.

For further information check out their website at
www.failte32.org

Just for Fun

Joke

An Irish turtle was walking down an alley in New York when he was mugged by a gang of snails. A police detective came to investigate and asked the turtle if he could explain what happened. The turtle looked at the detective with a confused look on his face and replied "I don't know, it all happened so fast."

Trivia

Answers to last month's trivia questions are in red below:

1. What is the name of Frank McCourt's follow-up memoir to "Angela's Ashes"?

- a) A Monk Swimming
- b) Tara Road
- c) 'Tis

2. What is the largest county in Ireland?

- a) Dublin
- b) Cork
- c) Tipperary

3. What was Michael Collins' fiancée called?

- a) Kitty Kiernan
- b) Nora Barnacle
- c) Maude Gonne

This month's questions:

1. In 1951 which film was shot on location in Cong, County Mayo and directed by John Ford?

- a) The Quiet Man
- b) Darbie O'Gill & The Little People
- c) Ryan's Daughter

2. Who was the first High King of Ireland?

- a) Cúchulainn
- b) Brian Boru
- c) Tuatha Dé Danann

3. Which Irish musician now has a statue to him on Harry Street off Grafton Street in Dublin?

- a) O'Carolan
- b) Bono
- c) Phil Lynott

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.

If you wish to submit an article or highlight something going on in your center to this newsletter, please submit to katie.fox@ciic-usa.org before the 10th of the month.



**Sincerely,
Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers**