

ports, and levees; robbing our families and our children of critical investments in education and health care reform; robbing our seniors of the retirement and health security they have counted on.

Every dollar we pay in interest is a dollar that is not going to investment in America's priorities. Instead, interest payments are a significant tax on all Americans—a debt tax that Washington doesn't want to talk about.

Senator Obama finally brought up our debt to unfriendly nations:

Now, there is nothing wrong with borrowing from foreign countries. But we must remember that the more we depend on foreign nations to lend us money, the more our economic security is tied to the whims of foreign leaders whose interests might not be aligned with ours.

Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that "the buck stops here." Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better.

I therefore intend to oppose the effort to increase America's debt limit.

Today, America's debt is over \$18 trillion—with a t. Clearly, President Obama has forgotten Senator Obama's words. But the American people remember, and on their behalf, I ask President Obama to decrease our debt by working with Congress to end the debt tax by growing our economy and shipping American natural gas to friendly countries like Ukraine, like India, like Japan, and like South Korea.

WELCOMING ENDA KENNY TO CAPITOL HILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MESSER). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, as the world prepares to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and this afternoon we welcome the Irish Prime Minister of the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, here to the Capitol, I want to pause for a moment to recognize the anniversary of a pivotal event in the peace process in the north of Ireland.

Twenty years ago, against the advice of his own State Department, President Bill Clinton granted a visa to the leader of Sinn Fein and its president, Gerry Adams, to visit the United States. It was at the time an unpopular decision, but history has proven it to be a catalyst for the peace process which, again, has proved to be most durable. It helped to bring an end to the longest standing political dispute in the history of the Western World. Simply put, Bill Clinton took an extraordinary risk that has paid huge dividends.

I was one of a handful of Members of Congress at the time who urged President Clinton to approve the visa. When Gerry Adams arrived in the United States after stopping in Boston, he made his way to my hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts, and ad-

ressed a core group of thousands at the John Boyle O'Reilly Club, and he thanked them for their support.

During his campaign for President, we had urged then-candidate Clinton to make peace in the island of Ireland a top foreign policy priority if he was to be elected. After his inauguration, to our great and pleasant surprise, he sent his National Security Adviser at the time, Tony Lake, to Capitol Hill to tell us that they were to elevate Ireland to the same category of priority as the Middle East.

A year later, on January 31 of 1994, the visa was issued to Gerry Adams, and the American dimension to the Irish peace process was born. Fourteen years later, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, and a society in the north of Ireland was transformed overnight.

On the night that Mr. Clinton offered that visa—it was one of the more memorable events in my career—I defended the Clinton administration that night on the BBC's Newsnight Hour, which would be the equivalent of Nightline here in America. I debated the leader of the UUP, Ken Maginnis.

Later today, I am hosting a briefing with Gerry Adams and the Congressional Friends of Ireland, and I urge our friends to visit with him if they can, and later on to meet the Irish Prime Minister at 3:30 this afternoon.

When we contrast where America and Ireland were in this special relationship that dates back three centuries, it is important to recall what it looked like in the north of Ireland 30 years ago. There were 30,000 British soldiers in an area the size of the State of Connecticut. There was a police force that held the position that nationalists need not apply—the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The British soldiers are gone and the Royal Ulster Constabulary are gone today. The watchtowers that monitored the activities largely of the nationalist community have been taken down, and you can cross from Derry to Donegal without knowing that you have moved from the north of Ireland to the Republic of Ireland or through Newry and County Down, as well, without being stopped, searched, and, in some instances, being frisked by British soldiers.

America's role in bringing about this success story provides an argument for the reach and the role of the United States in addressing some of the most difficult issues in the world. Ireland represented the longest standing political dispute in the history of the Western World, and America's role was pivotal to helping make that change. That model has become, today, something that could be emulated worldwide, and, in fact, the people who participated travel the world to talk about how they found common ground and a path forward.

There is a representative democracy in Belfast today in what is known as Stormont, where parties sit some days in disagreement and other days in

agreement, but always with the idea that they are in charge of their own destiny and their own future. That is the genius of representative democracy.

I call attention to this issue today because of many of the stubborn problems that plague the world, with the understanding that men and women of good will in the crucible of politics can indeed chart a path forward, and not to miss the fact that it was still the risk-taking of the Clinton administration that took up the notion that the nationalist voice on the island of Ireland and in the north of Ireland and six small counties should be heard, and today the result is all around us.

So as the political parties visit on the eve of St. Patrick's Day all across the island of Ireland, we can satisfy ourselves with this achievement: the notion, once again, that good will and understanding the other side's arguments can, in fact, be heralded in the sense of achievement, but also, again, in the Stormont government that has been duly elected.

So, today, we in America take great satisfaction as to the role our men and women played in bringing about this success story and also to recognize something on a personal basis. I and many others here were allowed to participate in all of these "it can never happen" moments. Thanks, America, for help, once again, in leading the way.

CONCERNS OF INADEQUATE CBP STAFFING AT MIAMI INTER- NATIONAL AIRPORT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a great sense of urgency over the critical need to have more Customs and Border Protection officers at Miami International Airport, known as MIA. MIA, which I humbly represent, is not only the busiest airport in the State of Florida, but it is also the second largest international gateway in the Nation. In fact, international passenger traffic at MIA has steadily grown over the last few years far more than any other U.S. international gateway. However, the insufficient Customs and Border Protection officers, known as CBP, staffing levels at MIA pose a threat to this welcome growth of travel and tourism into our country.

Passengers are experiencing long wait times for immigration and customs processing. For example, just a few days ago, last Wednesday, the 7,681 passengers who arrived at the Federal Inspection Service at MIA's North Terminal were held in line for more than 2 hours. Out of the 72 lanes available to assist passengers, only 20 were open. And there is only one simple explanation for this problem. CBP staffing does not meet the numbers needed for