

**The American Ireland Fund 20th National Gala Celebrating
\$90 Million raised for the *Promising Ireland Campaign* for Irish Charities**

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. & Congressman Paul D. Ryan Honored

Washington DC, Sunday, March 18, 2012 – The American Ireland Fund will host its 20th Annual National Gala on Monday, March 19, 2012 featuring a keynote address by **An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D., Prime Minister of Ireland.**

As St. Patrick's Day is celebrated around the world, The Worldwide Ireland Funds are holding events in 13 cities across 5 countries attended by over 6,000 supporters. It is projected that these events will raise an additional \$2 million for their *Promising Ireland Campaign* to assist Irish charities.

Over 750 influential American and Irish political and corporate leaders will gather to honor U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA) and U.S. Congressman Paul D. Ryan (R-WI) as they are presented with the 2012 American Ireland Fund Leadership Awards for their contributions to Irish America and Ireland. Senator Casey and Congressman Ryan have faithfully represented Irish and Irish American interests in the course of their public service. In Congressman Ryan's role as Chairman of the House Budget Committee and in Senator Casey's role as a key member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a member of the European subcommittee and Chairman of the Congressional Joint Economic Committee; they have both shown a keen interest in advancing the Peace Process in Northern Ireland and supporting the spirit of Ireland's economic recovery.

Special recognition will be given on the night to the launch of **The John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace at the University of Ulster**. In attendance will be **H.E. Michael Collins, Irish Ambassador to the US; Sir Peter Westmacott, British Ambassador to U.S.; H.E. Daniel M. Rooney, U.S. Ambassador to Ireland; Norman Houston, Director, Northern Ireland Bureau; Hon. Peter T. King and Hon. Richard E. Neal – Honorary Chairs and Loretta Brennan Glucksman, Chairman of The American Ireland Fund.**

President and CEO of The Worldwide Ireland Funds, Kieran McLoughlin said, "Over the last two weeks starting in San Francisco and culminating in Washington DC, our supporters have turned out in force and with great generosity. As a result, our Promising Ireland Campaign is now one year ahead of schedule with over \$90 million raised for hundreds of Irish charities in need. At a still-difficult time in the US, it is remarkable how our donors are responding and willing to play their part in aiding Ireland's recovery."

WHAT: The American Ireland Fund 20th National Gala,
An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, Honorary Chair
Honoring: **Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. and Congressman Paul Ryan**

MC: Norah O'Donnell, Chief White House Correspondent for CBS

WHEN: Monday, March 19, 2012 - 6:30PM Reception - 7:30PM Dinner

WHERE: The Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center - The Atrium - 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. Washington, DC

<http://theirelandfunds.org/>

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About The Worldwide Ireland Funds

The Worldwide Ireland Funds are an international charitable network operating in 12 countries and have raised over \$380 million for worthy causes in Ireland and around the world. The mission of The Ireland Funds is to be the largest worldwide network of people of Irish ancestry and friends of Ireland dedicated to raising funds to support programs of peace and reconciliation, arts and culture, education and community development throughout the island of Ireland. Founded in 1976, they have assisted over 1,200 organizations. The Worldwide Ireland Funds have launched the Promising Ireland Campaign to raise \$100 million by the end of 2013 on behalf of Irish charities. Charities across the island of Ireland are experiencing an increased demand for their services at a time of a major reduction in resources. The Campaign's title – Promising Ireland – reflects The Worldwide Ireland Funds' pledge to these groups as well as a belief in Ireland's future. Over 300 outstanding projects and organizations have already received support from the Promising Ireland Campaign. The American Ireland Fund is also proud to support local DC charities including PeacePlayers International, Washington-Ireland Program (WIP), and the Belfast –Beltway Boxing Project.