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## STOP OUR DEMOCRAT BIAS TO SAVE IRISH IN AMERICA, SAYS DEASY

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Ireland must learn to do business with the Republican Party if it wants to help the estimated 50,000 “undocumented” Irish in America, according to John Deasy, the government envoy to the US Congress.

For too long, Irish politicians have had “a real bias” towards the Democratic Party, said Deasy, who felt this needed to be rebalanced as a pragmatic approach to achieving “something” on immigration.

“We can’t continue to rely on the kind of influence we used to have 30 and 40 years ago. American politics has changed and the relationship with Ireland has changed,” said the Waterford TD. “It is clear we are not going to be treated as the special case any longer. Irish Americans are well aware of that but successive governments have been slow to realise how much influence and access we have lost ... It is just something you need to renew. That is recognised by the taoiseach and that is why he appointed me.”

Deasy declined to discuss reports he was disappointed not to join Leo Varadkar’s junior ministerial ranks last month. He said he had argued the case for a government envoy to US Congress and the taoiseach accepted the need.

He has begun talking to former contacts on Capitol Hill in Washington DC, where he worked for two Republicans in the Nineties — Senator John Heinz and Congressman Ronald Machtley — and will meet Irish lobby groups in several US cities this month.

“This doesn’t centre on the Trump administration, it centres around the House of Representatives and the majority view there as it applies to immigration visas and what they see as illegals in the US,” said Deasy.

“The rhetoric in some political circles — a lot of it stemming from the election campaign — has become extremely harsh. But there are plenty of Republicans who feel uncomfortable with that kind of rhetoric.”

He said he would not focus on extending America’s E3 visa for Australians to Irish citizens as that would exclude many undocumented Irish due to a requirement for a college degree or 12 years’ relevant work experience, which



**Ireland is going to need Republican friends on Capitol Hill to look after the interests of our nationals in America, according to government envoy John Deasy, below left**



many could not prove.

“There is no guarantee Republicans ... will ever agree to its passage,” he said. “We cannot afford to spend months and years chasing something that may be unattainable.”

“There is very strong opposition to comprehensive immigration reform in the House [of Representatives]. So if you are to gain any progression for undocumented Irish, you need to take a different approach and address their concerns about criminality.”

Deasy said of the 240,000 illegals deported from the US last year, just 26 were Irish. Criminality was not an issue among the

undocumented Irish, and that point had to be driven home in Congress.

Deasy will work with Dan Mulhall, the incoming Irish ambassador to America, and US Irish consulates. He will also discuss taxation with Congress.

Fears of a crackdown on undocumented Irish grew last month after John Cunningham, an Irish community leader in Boston, was arrested by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) service. Cunningham was deported from the US on Wednesday night, ICE confirmed last week.

Deasy said it was thought there was no crackdown on Irish “illegals” as such, but that ICE had stepped up its general activity.

Cunningham, 38, an electrician from Donegal, had lived in America for 16 years after overstaying a 90-day holiday visa.

IrishCentral.com said the former chair of Boston Northeast GAA club also had a warrant out for his arrest for failing to appear in court in 2014. He had been charged with accepting \$1,300 (€1,140) for repairs but not doing the work.