

For **Written Answer** on : **24/07/2018**
Question Number(s): **131** Question Reference(s): **34479/18**
Department: **Foreign Affairs and Trade**
Asked by: **Brendan Smith T.D.**

QUESTION

REPLY

Question No. 131

Parliamentary Question - Oireachtas

To ask the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of immigration reform in the United States of America with particular reference to the status of the undocumented Irish; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Brendan Smith.

* For WRITTEN answer on Tuesday, 24th July, 2018.

Ref No: 34479/18

REPLY

The Government has consistently pursued two key objectives with regard to supporting Irish communities in the United States; increased pathways for legal migration by Irish citizens to the US and relief for the plight of undocumented Irish citizens living in the US.

In that regard, the Taoiseach discussed the issue with President Trump in the Oval Office last March and also in his meetings on Capitol Hill during this year's St. Patrick's Day visit.

The Government's Special Envoy to the United States Congress on the Undocumented, Deputy John Deasy, has also been very active on the issue and has, since his appointment, traveled to Washington, D.C., on nine separate occasions for meetings with key contacts.

In addition, our Embassy in Washington, D.C., continues to engage on an ongoing basis with the Administration and with contacts on Capitol Hill.

The Embassy, as well as our six Consulates across the United States, also work very closely with Irish immigration centres which support the needs of Irish citizens in the United States, including undocumented Irish citizens.

Through these many high-level contacts and discussions, the Government has been exploring a number of different options, including the possibility of a reciprocal agreement covering the undocumented Irish in the US, on the one hand, and US citizens looking to move to Ireland, on the other.

However, this remains a very challenging issue and I do not want to raise expectations unduly. Immigration reform has been a sensitive and indeed divisive issue within the US political system for decades, with pronounced disagreement, even within the same political parties, on the best way to deal with an issue which directly affects over 11 million people.

I can assure the House that the Government, Special Envoy Deputy Deasy, and our Embassy in Washington, D.C., will continue to prioritise this issue, mindful of its importance to the thousands of undocumented and to their families in Ireland, and that we will spare no effort in seeking a solution.