

ROGER HANSHAW
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE



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STATE CAPITOL, ROOM M-228
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CHARLESTON, WV 25305

April 23, 2024

State Legislative Leaders

Dear Colleagues:

The Ireland Trade Commission legislation was drafted by a member of the New Jersey American Irish State Legislators Caucus following their trip to Ireland in 2022. The members of the Caucus asked after their visit to Belfast how they could help support the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement and this legislation was the result of those discussions. With this Commission States are helping communities in Ireland but also helping communities in their own State through the creation of educational, economic, governmental, and person to person links.

As a result of the Brexit agreement following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, Northern Ireland uniquely now has access to both the UK market of 67 million people and the European Union (EU) market of 450 million people. The Republic of Ireland also has direct access to the EU market. There are 950 US companies based in Ireland using it as a gateway to the EU. Ireland is also the 9th largest investor in the US. The Ireland Trade Commission is intended to build on this two-way relationship.

The legislation can be adopted as drafted or amended to suit the needs of your state. For example, States could adopt a version which provides any or all of the following features:

- There could be no cost to the taxpayer in each State as the Commission could be charged with raising the funds to do its work to visit Ireland and host visiting Irish Delegations
- People may be appointed by the Governor, the Senate President, Speaker/ Majority Leader, and Minority Leader.
- Members can be appointed by the Chambers of Commerce in the State or an equivalent organization and by the Universities or their representative Associations.
- The remaining open places on the Commission could be drawn from the retired members of the State or federal legislative delegations so that institutional knowledge is retained. Leaders of the business community in the State with an interest in Ireland could be appointed to the commission.

State Legislative Leaders
April 23, 2024
Page 2

- The membership of the Commission ideally would be bipartisan like the membership of the American Irish State Legislator Caucus.
- The members can range from 9 as is the case with West Virginia or up to 23 as is the case with New Jersey.

We value our relationship with our Irish friends and look forward to deepening our shared connections. Our objective in adopting legislation to create the Irish Trade Commission is to enhance those mutually beneficial opportunities.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Hanshaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" and last name "Hanshaw" clearly distinguishable.

Roger Hanshaw
Speaker