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The Ancient Order of Hibernians was well represented at the D.C. gathering. Pictured at the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform lunch at the Hay-Adams hotel were (from left) Danny O'Connell, Ohio; Jim Lawracy, South Carolina; Bill Young, New Jersey; Seamus Boyle, AOH National President; Patrick Giblin, Irish American Democrats New Jersey; Jere Cole, New Jersey; Sean Pender, New Jersey, and Joseph Casey, Ohio. PHOTO BY JAY PREMACK.

Irish in D.C.

By Ray O'Hanlon

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The Irish got their "spoke in" on the immigration reform debate last week when a varied and far-flung delegation of Irish American leaders and community activists gathered in Washington D.C. at the invitation of the White House.

More than 50 visitors came to the nation's capital from both coasts and the heartland of the Midwest to listen to briefings from three top staffers in the Obama administration who work in the areas of both domestic and foreign policy.

The briefing, which was designated as a background one by the White House, was preceded by a very much on the record one in the nearby Hay-Adams Hotel, where the Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform hosted a lunch during which the delegation was brought up to date on the immigration reform situation in Congress by former congressman Bruce Morrison, who acts for the ILIR as an advisor and lobbyist.

Morrison said that the first signs of action in the Senate could be expected soon, as early as February or March.

The subsequent briefing at the White House, which lasted over two hours, and which was set in train by Stella O'Leary of the Irish American Democrats, was an opportunity for delegation members to ask a wide variety of questions.

The ILIR's Ciaran Staunton said it was a groundbreaker in that for the first time, the Irish were raising their immigration concerns directly with the White House.

In addition to questions on immigration reform, the visitors asked a wide variety on other issues of Irish American concern, most notably Northern Ireland.

SEE PHOTO, PAGE 3.

Shades of green in the White House



PHOTO BY JAY PREMACK

Leaders of Irish American organizations and community activists from all over the United States were invited to a briefing on issues of Irish American concern at the White House last week. The briefing took place in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building next door to the executive mansion. The delegation is pictured here on Pennsylvania Avenue minutes before the briefing.