**Freedom For All Ireland – Dolores Desch**

**Christmas Appeal:** The 2020-2021 Christmas Appealis underway and will run until Spring 2021. We do not have the end date identified yet, but as soon as that is determined, I will send a notification to those on my mailing list and post it to the Facebook Page and Website. The groups we help in the north of Ireland are in need of our support so we are asking all Divisions to support this appeal. Please send your donations directly to me at this address: 20 Arlene Ave. Albany, NY 12203. Please include the check payable to: LAOH, Inc**.**, the full name of your State, County, Division making the donation and a contact name with email address. Also, you may designate the donation to any of the following groups: Relatives for Justice, Holy Cross Trust, St. Patrick's Center-Downpatrick, Cairde, Belfast National Graves, Down Patriot Graves, EALU, Tyrone, New Lodge Commemoration Committee, Conway Mill Trust, Tyrone AOH, Bridges Beyond Boxing, Belfast, Green Cross, Omagh Basketball, Omagh Choir, Duchas-Oiriall, Ballymurphy Families Committee, Bloody Sunday Trust - Museum of Free Derry, Tyrone National Graves, The Witness Project-Sean Murray, The Pat Finucane Center.

For 2019-2020 we had a record setting 7 entities which gave $1,000.00 or more to FFAI. Congratulations and a big Thank You to: Maryland State Board, Michigan State Board, New York-Albany County JFK Division 1, New York–Schenectady County JFK Division 1, Pennsylvania State Board, Pennsylvania-Philadelphia County Board, Pennsylvania – Pittsburgh, Mary Ellen Myers. The awards are in the process of being delivered to the donors. Thank you to all who donated in 2019-2020.

**Brexit News:** Time is running out for Britain and the EU to work out a post-Brexit trade agreement and the next few weeks are critical to getting a deal in place by December 31. If that deadline is missed, the risk is a significant trade disruption which would cause catastrophic economic losses. In addition to a trade deal, there are also other agreements required to be settled such as fishing rights, dispute resolution and treaty pacts. The showstopper is the UK plan to pass legislation for trade between the north of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom in the event of a no-deal Brexit. That bill would violate international law by over-riding the withdrawal agreement previously agreed to with the EU in January by allowing UK ministers to not apply the EU rules if no trade deal is made with the EU. With the EU regulations not being enforced, the threat of a EU required hard border to protect the Republic from unregulated products is high. In the US, American Irish groups are putting pressure on elected officials to not approve any trade deal with the UK if the bill goes through. Members of the US Congress and other elected officials have said that they will oppose any trade deal with the UK unless they adhere to the Withdrawal agreement and ensure that there will be no hard border on the island and no dismantling of the Good Friday Agreement.

**FFAI Events**: On October 24, 2020 Hibernians were honored to be invited to the Plastic Justice event sponsored by Relatives for Justice. We joined RFJ at this virtual launch of the Plastic Justice Report and heard heart-wrenching stories from families who had loved ones killed in the conflict with plastic bullets fired by security forces. RFJ discussed their research based on years of analysis and spotlighted many of the cases and the lack of anyone being held accountable for these killings. The full report as well as the Zoom recording can be found on our national website page at: <https://ladiesaoh.com/freedom-for-all-ireland/>.

On December 5, we will again be hosting an event with our AOH brothers and those in the north of Ireland regarding the Hunger Strikers. As the 40th anniversary of the Hunger Strike nears, we are looking forward to hearing from some of those who went on Hunger Strike. Please stay tuned for the details, which will be available on our LAOH Freedom For All Ireland Facebook Page, national website page and will be mailed to all on the FFAI mailing list.

I recently held the quarterly meeting with FFAI State Chairs, as well as all other interested members and we discussed several topics, including what we can do to increase participation and awareness of FFAI in the LAOH. We all agreed that communication and knowledge is key and that our goal is to **make sure that all Divisions have an FFAI appointee**. This appointee is critical for each Division in relaying the latest information on the news, issues and programs affecting those living in the north of Ireland. Division Presidents, please appoint a FFAI Chairperson and provide them with the FFAI information available on our national website page and Facebook Page. I am also happy to assist if you need any help.

**Exciting News!** Our sister Kathleen Savage, Massachusetts FFAI Chair was honored on November 20th by the Golden Bridges Committee with the David Burke Award. The Golden Bridges initiative connects Boston, Massachusetts and Northwest Ireland. Congratulations to Kathleen for her years of service to the community and in bringing hope and support to those in the north of Ireland. For more information go to <https://golden-bridges.heysummit.com/>.

Please like, follow and share our FFAI Page <https://ladiesaoh.com/freedom-for-all-ireland/> which contains updated information as well as FFAI news. If you are not receiving my emails, please send me your email address. As always, if you have any questions or would like more information please contact me at laohnationalffai@gmail.com. Thank you for all of your support for Freedom For All Ireland.

Go raibh maith agat.