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The California Italian American Taskforce

Building a Better Future for Italian Americans

On August 5, 1996, a Resolution was passed in the California State Assembly calling for the creation of a statewide Italian American Taskforce to address the concerns of Italian American Californians. The first Taskforce of its kind in the nation. About 2 million Italian Americans live in California.

The new Taskforce will give Italian Americans an historic opportunity to address their issues at the state government policy level where so many of the decisions that affect Italian Americans are made. The Taskforce will act as an advisory body to the the State Assembly on Italian American concerns and related legislation.

The Assembly resolution was authored by Assemblymember Dominic Cortese of San Jose and was co-authored by 42 Assemblymembers. Appointments to the Taskforce are made by the Governor who has given his strong support to forming the Taskforce. The first organizational meeting of the Taskforce was held in August. Members of the Taskforce represent all geographical areas of the State and serve three year terms.

In creating the Taskforce, the Assembly Resolution recognized that Italian American immigrants were among the largest immigrant groups to settle in California as well as the entire United States and today are the fifth largest ancestry group in the country. It also recognized that Italians were among the earliest pioneers of California and have been instrumental in the economic and social development of the State.

This is the first time that Italian Americans have had an effective voice at the state public policy level. It has taken our community over 100 years to organize for success at this level.

The forming of the California Taskforce has already had a national impact. Italian American legislators in other states are now expressing interest in establishing similar Commissions in their states and plans are underway by national Italian American leaders to establish a similar Taskforce at the federal level to represent the Italian American population of the nation, now estimated to be 26 million.

Italian Americans have their own specific issues that need to be addressed and which have not been. Issues such as the study of the Italian language and the Italian American experience in the State's schools that could not be effectively addressed by local and regional Italian organizations.

The public policy decisions that affect these issues are made at the state level by state agencies and the state Legislature. Other ethnic, cultural and identity groups in California have been organized and have been effective in influencing policy at the state level while Italian Americans have largely been ignored.

Now, Italian Americans can begin the task of building a better future for Italian Americans in California