LEGISCAN

Bill Text: CA SR103 | 2023-2024 | Regular Session | Introduced
California Senate Resolution 103

Bill Title: Relative to Italian American Heritage Month.

Spectrum: Slight Partisan Bill (Democrat 2-1)

Status: *(Introduced)* 2024-08-07 - Re-referred to Com. on ED. [SR103 Detail]

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2023–2024 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE RESOLUTION **NO. 103**

Introduced by Senator Portantino
(Coauthors: Senators Cortese and Niello)

July 02, 2024

Relative to Italian American Heritage Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SR 103, as introduced, Portantino.

Digest Key

Bill Text

WHEREAS, A study published in December 2004 of social science textbooks used in California schools and universities by Lawrence DiStasi and the Italian American Textbook Committee, titled The Treatment of Italian Americans in California Textbooks, found that Italian American contributions were largely absent from elementary, secondary, and postsecondary textbooks used in California; and

WHEREAS, Italian Americans are the fifth largest ethnic group in America numbering roughly 26,000,000 people, with nearly 1,500,000 residing in California. For much of the 20th century, Italian Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States, yet they are not extended proper credit for their role in shaping American culture; and

WHEREAS, As one of the country's greatest success stories, Italian Americans made enormous contributions to our country and state. For example, Amadeo Pietro "A.P." Giannini (The Giant of the West), born of Italian immigrant parents in San Jose in 1870, began establishing branches of his Bank of Italy in 1904 in the Italian neighborhoods across California, becoming the first branch banking system in the United States, which he renamed the Bank of America in 1930. The philosophy that spurred the success of Bank of America was to invest in common people to stimulate rapid economic growth. Mr. Giannini's investments include the movie industry, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Walt Disney Company, and much of today's agribusiness; and

WHEREAS, Italian immigrant Marco Fontana arrived in the United States in 1859 and started the California Packing Company under the Del Monte label. His cannery soon became the largest food processing company in the world. Domenico Ghirardelli settled in San Francisco during the Gold Rush and founded the Ghirardelli Chocolate empire. The movie industry, the fifth largest employer in the County of Los Angeles, owes much of its success to numerous Italian American artists, including Danny DeVito, John Travolta,

Sylvester Stallone, Al Pacino, Vito Russo, Isabella Rossellini, Liza Minelli, Anne Bancroft, Marisa Tomei, and many others. Italian Americans have served this country in governance as well, such as United States Representative Nancy Pelosi as Speaker of the House; and

WHEREAS, The wine industry in California owes much of its success to Italian Americans. Italian pioneers established the early wine industry in the California foothills of the Gold Country following the Gold Rush of 1848. In 1881, Italian immigrant Andrea Sbarboro founded the Italian Swiss Colony at Asti, a cooperative of Italian immigrants from the wine growing areas of northern Italy. The colony quickly became the largest winery in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Later Italian winemakers like Robert Mondavi and the Sebastiani family established world class status for California wines. Beginning in the 1940s, Ernest Gallo and Julio Gallo established the largest family owned winery in the United States in California's central valley. Zinfandel might have disappeared had it not been resurrected by the Bob Trinchero family winery, the first to introduce white Zinfandel from their Sutter Home Winery in the Napa Valley; and

WHEREAS, Italian Americans were among the earliest and largest groups to settle in California, and they played a dominant role in the creation of the state's agriculture, food processing, branch banking, fishing, and wine industries. Little-known facts regarding the experience and contributions of Italian Americans include the following: (1) Between 1880 and 1920, about 4,000,000 Italians immigrated to the United States and nearly one-third of Ellis Island immigrants were Italian. Restrictive immigration laws at that time were directly aimed at Italian immigrants and based on anti-Italian attitudes; and (2) Italians played a large role in the development of agriculture in California. Their control and development of fruit and vegetable industries in the central valley, truck farming in major urban centers, and their influence on the development of wine and grape industries left a legacy shared by us all; and

WHEREAS, Although Italians constituted the largest ethnic group in the American military during World War II, an estimated 600,000 Italian immigrants nationwide suffered wartime restrictions, including internment and arrest, curfews, travel restrictions, and seizure of their personal property. Some 10,000 Italian Americans were forced to relocate from coastal areas of California; and

WHEREAS, Italian American contributions to California and United States history can be easily incorporated in the current elementary and secondary curriculum content. Italian Americans played a vital role in shaping the cultural landscape of California. The story of California would be incomplete without telling the story of their distinctive contributions to the history and development of the state and the nation. Including Italian Americans in the educational experience would help provide better awareness and understanding of the unique cultural differences of this significant part of the state's ethnic diversity and help overcome more than a century of prejudice against them; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, the Legislature established the California Italian American Task Force. The highest priority of the task force is the inclusion in the public school curriculum of Italian American history, achievements, and contributions; and

WHEREAS, Both Italian American heritage and the individual and collective contributions of Italian Americans deserve the state's recognition and commendation and the designation of a month in their honor for collective reflection and celebration; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate designates the month of October 2024, and every October thereafter, as Italian American Heritage Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Senate encourages public schools to highlight and include Italian American achievements and contributions to the culture of California, and to take steps to promote the inclusion of the role and contributions of Italian Americans to the culture and history of California and the United States in the elementary and secondary social science textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks; and be it further

Resolved, That the Senate encourages public schools to include Italian Americans in ethnic studies courses; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author, members of the State Board of Education, the Instructional Quality Commission, and to school districts for appropriate distribution.