

California Italian-American Task Force



Governor Appoints Italian American Taskforce

Italian Americans constitute one of the largest ancestral groups in California. The Italian people were among the earliest settlers of the State and their settlement began even before the Gold Rush of the 1850's. Today, there are some two million Italian Americans who live and work in California. In fact, up until World War II, they were the largest immigrant group to settle in California.

Despite being a large and established population in California, Italian Americans as a group have not had a strong voice and their needs and concerns have generally been ignored by the States institutions. While the contributions of Italian Americans to the development of California have been enormous, they remain unrecognized. Both the history and the experience of the many generations of Italian Americans who have lived and died in California remain left out of the State's textbooks.

Italian Americans are becoming a people without a history. How many of us know about the the persecution of Italian Americans in California during World War II. This was one of the most painful experiences in Italian American history. Yet, the internment, arrest and forced relocation of thousands of innocent California Italians during the war remains unmentioned in our state's official history.

The new Italian American Taskforce recently appointed by the Governor has included among its tasks the goal of documenting the history, achievements and contributions of Italian Americans in California.

Other concerns that the Taskforce hopes to place on the public policy agenda of the state include:

1. To establish a California Italian American Heritage Museum for the preservation and study of the California Italian American experience.
2. To promote the availability of Italian language and

cultural studies in the State Universities and public schools.

3. To promote the study of the Italian American experience within the public school curriculum and the establishment of Italian American studies programs in the University of California and State University systems.

4. To promote the equal treatment of Italian Americans before the law, in university admissions and employment opportunities and in all other rights of citizenship.

5. To promote the award of grants for Italian American initiatives by the California Councils for the Humanities and Arts.

6. To promote positive images of Italian Americans by the film, television and print media

7. To promote trade and cultural exchange between Italy and California.

The new Italian American Taskforce is an historic opportunity for Italian Americans to unite across the State in support of a common cause. Italian American leaders have long recognized the need to establish a public policy agenda at the State and national levels that has the support of the entire Italian American community in order to address its concerns and its collective destiny.

The members of the Taskforce governing board are: State Assemblyman Dominic Cortese {chair}; Ted Balestreri of Pebble Beach; Joseph Cerrell of Los Angeles; William Cerruti of Sacramento; Frank De Santis of Villa Park; Edward DiLoreto of Downey; George Graziadio of Los Angeles; Vima Micheli of Sacramento; Marie Moretti of Sacramento; Supreme Court Justice Edward Panelli [ret.] of Sarotaga; David Roberti of Los Angeles; Rose Marie Mercurio Royster of San Diego; Louis Trincherro of St. Helena; Frank Tripepi of Rosemead; and State Senator Cathie Wright of Simi Valley.