

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 145

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 125

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 145—Relative to pupil instruction.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 5, 2008.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 145, Portantino. Pupil instruction: social sciences.

This measure would designate the month of October as Italian American Heritage Month and encourage public schools to highlight Italian American achievements and contributions to the culture of California and to take steps to promote the inclusion of the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans to United States and California history and social science in elementary and secondary textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks.

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 sixth largest ethnic group in America numbering roughly 25 million people, with nearly 1.5 million residing in California. For much of the 20th century, Italian Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States, yet they are not appropriately 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, Amedeo Pietro "A.P." Giannini, born of Italian immigrant parents in San Jose in 1870, established in the Italian neighborhoods across California the first branch banking system in the United States, known as Bank of America. The philosophy that spun 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. Andrea Sbarboro is credited as one of the major founders of the California wine industry and Robert

Mondavi was instrumental in establishing world class credibility for California's wine industry. The movie industry, the fifth largest employer in Los Angeles County, owes much of its success to numerous Italian artists, including Danny DeVito, John Travolta, and Al Pacino; 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 million Italians immigrated to the United States and nearly one-quarter of Ellis Island immigrants were Italian. Restrictive immigration laws at that time were directly aimed at Italian immigrants and based on anti-Italian attitudes; (2) 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, and travel restrictions. Some 10,000 Italian Americans were forced to relocate from coastal areas of California; and (3) 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, Italian American contributions to California and United States history can be easily incorporated in the current elementary and secondary curriculum content. Including the vital role of Italian Americans in shaping California into the state it is today will help pupils truly understand a significant part of our state's unique culture and will help them understand how the interdependence of people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural differences makes our country truly great; 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. The task force and scholars have tried to use current law as a basis to promote inclusion of the contributions of Italian Americans in current curriculum, but have been advised that express legislative authority or encouragement is necessary to achieve this goal; and

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

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature designates the month of October as Italian American Heritage Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature encourages public schools to highlight Italian American achievements and contributions to the culture of California and to take steps to promote the inclusion of the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans to United States and California history

and social science in elementary and secondary textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author, members of the State Board of Education, and to school districts for appropriate distribution.

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