

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY AUGUST 31, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

**Assembly Concurrent Resolution**

**No. 89**

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**Introduced by Assembly Members Galgiani and Portantino  
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Ammiano, Hill, and Niello)**

August 17, 2009

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 89—Relative to Italian American Heritage Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 89, as amended, Galgiani. Italian American Heritage Month.

This measure would designate the month of October 2009, and every October thereafter, as Italian American Heritage Month. This measure would encourage 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 ~~achievements~~ *role* and contributions of Italian Americans to ~~United States and~~ *the culture and history of California* ~~history and social science and the United States~~ in elementary and secondary textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks.

Fiscal committee: no.

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

1 WHEREAS, Italian Americans are the sixth largest ethnic group  
2 in America numbering roughly 25 million people, with nearly 1.5  
3 million residing in California. For much of the 20th century, Italian  
4 Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States,  
5 yet they are not extended proper credit for their role in shaping  
6 American culture; and

7 WHEREAS, As one of the country's greatest success stories,  
8 Italian Americans made enormous contributions to our country  
9 and state. For example, Amedeo Pietro "A.P." Giannini, born of  
10 Italian immigrant parents in San Jose in 1870, established in the  
11 Italian neighborhoods across California the first branch banking  
12 system in the United States, known today as Bank of America.  
13 The philosophy that spun the success of Bank of America was to  
14 invest in common people to stimulate rapid economic growth. Mr.  
15 Giannini's investments include the movie industry, the Golden  
16 Gate Bridge, the Walt Disney Company, and much of today's  
17 agribusiness; and

18 WHEREAS, Italian immigrant Marco Fontana arrived in the  
19 United States in ~~1959~~ 1859 and started the California Packing  
20 Company under the Del Monte label. His cannery soon became  
21 the largest food processing company in the world. Domenico  
22 Ghirardelli settled in San Francisco during the Gold Rush and  
23 founded the Ghirardelli Chocolate empire. The movie industry,  
24 the fifth largest employer in Los Angeles County, owes much of  
25 its success to numerous Italian American artists, including Danny  
26 DeVito, John Travolta, Silvester Stallone, Al Pacino, *Vito Russo*,  
27 and many others; and

28 WHEREAS, The wine industry in California owes much of its  
29 success to Italian Americans. Italian pioneers established the early  
30 wine industry in the California foothills of the Gold County  
31 following the Gold Rush of 1848. In 1881, Italian immigrant  
32 Andrea Sbarboro founded the Italian Swiss Colony at Asti, a  
33 cooperative of Italian immigrants from the wine growing areas of  
34 Northern Italy. The colony quickly became the largest winery in  
35 the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Later Italian winemakers like  
36 Robert Mondavi and the Sebastiani family established world class  
37 status for California wines. Beginning in the 1940s, Ernest Gallo  
38 and Julio Gallo established the largest family owned winery in the  
39 United States in California's central valley. Zinfandel might have  
40 disappeared had it not been resurrected by the Robert Trinchero

1 family winery, the first to introduce white Zinfandel from their  
2 Sutter Home Winery in the Napa Valley; and

3 WHEREAS, Italian Americans were among the earliest and  
4 largest groups to settle in California, and they played a dominant  
5 role in the creation of the state's agriculture, food processing,  
6 branch banking, fishing, and wine industries. Little-known facts  
7 regarding the experience and contributions of Italian Americans  
8 include the following: (1) Between 1880 and 1920, about 4 million  
9 Italians immigrated to the United States and nearly one-quarter of  
10 Ellis Island immigrants were Italian. Restrictive immigration laws  
11 at that time were directly aimed at Italian immigrants and based  
12 on anti-Italian attitudes; (2) Although Italians constituted the largest  
13 ethnic group in the American military during World War II, an  
14 estimated 600,000 Italian immigrants nationwide suffered wartime  
15 restrictions including internment and arrest, curfews, and travel  
16 restrictions. Some 10,000 Italian Americans were forced to relocate  
17 from coastal areas of California; and (3) Italians played a large  
18 role in the development of agriculture in California. Their control  
19 and development of fruit and vegetable industries in the central  
20 valley, truck farming in major urban centers, and their influence  
21 on the development of wine and grape industries left a legacy  
22 shared by us all; and

23 WHEREAS, Italian American contributions to California and  
24 United States history can be easily incorporated in the current  
25 elementary and secondary curriculum content. Including the vital  
26 role of Italian Americans in shaping California into the state it is  
27 today will help pupils truly understand a significant part of our  
28 state's unique culture and will help them understand how the  
29 interdependence of people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural  
30 differences makes our country truly great; and

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

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

39 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*  
40 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature designates the month of

1 October 2009, and every October thereafter, as Italian American  
2 Heritage Month; and be it further  
3 *Resolved*, That the Legislature encourages public schools to  
4 highlight and include Italian American achievements and  
5 contributions to the culture of California and to take steps to  
6 promote the inclusion of ~~Italian American history~~ *the role and*  
7 *contributions of Italian Americans to the culture and history of*  
8 *California and the United States* in the elementary and secondary  
9 social science textbooks during the revision process for those  
10 textbooks; and be it further  
11 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
12 of this resolution to the author, members of the State Board of  
13 Education, the Curriculum Development and Supplemental  
14 Materials Commission, and to school districts for appropriate  
15 distribution.