

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 4, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY AUGUST 31, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009–10 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 89

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

August 17, 2009

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 role and contributions of Italian Americans to the culture and history of California and the United States in elementary and secondary *social science* 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

1 elementary, secondary, and postsecondary textbooks used in
2 California; and

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

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

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

30 WHEREAS, The wine industry in California owes much of its
31 success to Italian Americans. Italian pioneers established the early
32 wine industry in the California foothills of the Gold County
33 following the Gold Rush of 1848. In 1881, Italian immigrant
34 Andrea Sbarboro founded the Italian Swiss Colony at Asti, a
35 cooperative of Italian immigrants from the wine growing areas of
36 Northern Italy. The colony quickly became the largest winery in
37 the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Later Italian winemakers like
38 Robert Mondavi and the Sebastiani family established world class
39 status for California wines. Beginning in the 1940s, Ernest Gallo
40 and Julio Gallo established the largest family owned winery in the

1 United States in California's central valley. Zinfandel might have
2 disappeared had it not been resurrected by the Robert Trinchero
3 family winery, the first to introduce white Zinfandel from their
4 Sutter Home Winery in the Napa Valley; and

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

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

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

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

1 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
2 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature designates the month of
3 October 2009, and every October thereafter, as Italian American
4 Heritage Month; and be it further

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

12 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
13 of this resolution to the author, members of the State Board of
14 Education, the Curriculum Development and Supplemental
15 Materials Commission, and to school districts for appropriate
16 distribution.