

Date of Hearing: August 29, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
SCR 157 (Portantino) – As Amended August 14, 2018

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Italian American Heritage Month

SUMMARY: Designates the month of October, 2018 as Italian American Heritage Month, and encourages the inclusion of Italian American achievements and contributions to the culture and history of the United States in elementary and secondary school social science textbooks.

Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Resolves that the Legislature designates the month of October 2018 as Italian American Heritage Month.
- 2) States that a study published in December 2004 of social science textbooks used in California schools and universities found that Italian American contributions were largely absent from elementary, secondary, and postsecondary textbooks used in California.
- 3) States that Italian Americans are the sixth largest ethnic group in America, numbering roughly 25 million people, with nearly 1.5 million residing in California. States that 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.
- 4) States that Italian Americans' contributions to California and United States history can be easily incorporated in the current elementary and secondary curriculum content. States that 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 the 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.
- 5) States that in 1996, the Legislature established the California Italian-American Task Force, and that the highest priority of the Task Force is the inclusion in the public school curriculum of Italian American history, achievements, and contributions.
- 6) Resolves that the Legislature 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 Italian American history in elementary and secondary social science textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks.
- 7) Resolves that the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies to the author, members of the State Board of Education (SBE), the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC), and to school districts for appropriate distribution.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the IQC to recommend curriculum frameworks to the SBE and develop criteria for evaluating instructional materials submitted for adoption so that the materials adopted adequately cover the subjects in the indicated grade levels.
- 2) Requires governing boards of school districts, when adopting instructional materials for use in the schools, to adopt only instructional materials which, in their determination, accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society.
- 3) Resolves that the Legislature designates the month of October 2009 and every October thereafter as Italian American Heritage Month. (Resolution Chapter 113, Statutes of 2009)
- 4) Resolves that the Legislature 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 Italian American history in elementary and secondary social science textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks. (Resolution Chapter 113, Statutes of 2009)

FISCAL EFFECT: This resolution has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the resolution. According to the author, “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 would largely absent from elementary, secondary, and postsecondary textbooks used in California.”

Recently updated History-Social Science Framework. The History-Social Science Content Standards, adopted in 1998, require inclusion of ethnic groups, including Italians and Italian Americans, in the discussion of historical events throughout all grade levels.

The SBE adopted the most recent version of the History-Social Science Framework in 2016 and will not revise it again until 2024. The framework includes references to the content above and also states: “In addition, many persons of Italian and German origin who were in the United States when World War II began were classified as “enemy aliens” under the Enemy Alien Control Program and had their rights restricted, including thousands who were interned.

Prior legislation. ACR 68 (Portantino, Resolution Chapter 83, Statutes of 2011) continued designation and observance of the month of October as Italian American Heritage Month; encouraged the Legislature to continue the Italian American Legislator Project and welcome the exhibit “The Italian American Legislator Project of 2011: A Legacy of Service to the California Legislature” to the State Capitol Building in October 2011; and encouraged all Californians, through K-12 curriculum and otherwise, to learn about the history, role, and contributions of Italian Americans to the State of California.

ACR 89 (Galgiani, Resolution Chapter 113, Statutes of 2009) was similar to this resolution and designated October 2009 and each October thereafter as Italian American Heritage Month and also encouraged 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 Italian

American history in elementary and secondary social science textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks.

ACR 145 (Portantino, Resolution Chapter 125, Statutes of 2008) was similar to this resolution and designated the month of October as Italian American Heritage Month and encouraged 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 U.S. and California history in elementary and secondary textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks.

AB 1863 (Portantino, 2008) would have expressed the encouragement of the Legislature for schools to include the role and contribution of Italian Americans to the economic, political, and social development of California and the United States in the instruction of social sciences, and encouraged the SBE to include the role and contribution of Italian Americans to the economic, political, and social development of California and the U.S. in the social sciences curriculum frameworks at the next revision of those frameworks. AB 1863 was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger.

AB 390 (Canciamilla, 2005) would have required that the SBE, at the next revision of curriculum frameworks in social sciences, to include the role and contribution of Italian Americans to the economic, political, and social development of California and the United States. AB 390 was held on the Assembly Floor.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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