

53rd Biennial National O.S.I.A. Convention

**National Commission for Social Justice
Order Sons of Italy in America**

Plenary Session Report

August 11th, 2013 – August 18th, 2013



**Hyatt Regency Philadelphia
Penn's Landing
201 South Columbia Blvd.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106**

August 8, 2013

Dear National OSIA President Joseph DiTrapani, National OSIA Officers, Grand Lodge Presidents, Delegates, CSJ Executive Officers, CSJ Chairpeople, Sisters and Brothers,

On behalf of the National Commission for Social Justice, we extend greetings to everyone assembled for our Biennial National Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I write this report with mixed emotions since this will be the last Plenary Session Report under my presidency. This report will update you as to the latest activities of the National CSJ in fighting bias, bigotry and defamation of Italian Americans and others.

We have had many successes in the last few months, notably, the rescinding of the California Assembly Bill replacing Columbus Day with Native American Day, the return of the Italian language to the North Shore Public School System in New York, and the rescinding of a derogatory campaign ad on Cablevision Channel 12, Long Island, NY. Recently, there was an additional issue regarding a food truck named "The Wandering Dago" which was denied acceptance to Saratoga Racetrack because of the negative connotation of the word "dago" and the efforts of the NY Grand Lodge President, Joseph Rondinelli and the NYS CSJ Chairman, Louis Gallo. We were even written up in the *NY Times* with regard to this issue. There were also many other positives as well, notably the NYS OSIA and NY CSJ's financial assistance, donated in the name of the late National CSJ President Emeritus, John Dabbene, to the largest parochial school and parish on Staten Island, enabling them to install a teacher of Italian and Italian language classes from Kindergarten through Eighth Grades. Congratulations to all of our CSJ's throughout the country who do the work of the OSIA on a daily basis.

We are very proud of the accomplishments of the National and State CSJ's in pursuing rightful justice for our members throughout the country. National CSJ has fought and won battles with the support of the local CSJ's and vice-versa. Herewith, are some examples. Recently, we were notified of an issue in New York regarding defamation of an Italian American political candidate. In Nassau County, a candidate for the Democratic position of Nassau County Executive, Adam Haber, released his second, thirty second television ad, distributed to Cablevision Channel 12, the leading Long Island cable station, depicting his Democratic opponent, former Nassau County Executive, Thomas Suozzi, as a "Sopranos" like hack. Furthermore, he stated that he had no intention of removing the defamatory ad. No matter what your politics, the ad depicting obviously loud, boisterous Italian men sitting around a restaurant table with a large "Cinzano" sign above their heads, eating and drinking wine while discussing how they benefited from Suozzi's misuse of public resources, intimated that public resources were used inappropriately by Suozzi and hinted at his connection to the mob. In a letter to NYS OSIA lodge presidents and membership, NYS OSIA President, Joseph Rondinelli, stated that, "The insinuation in the ad is that they will be supporting him because during his administration, they received lucrative pay raises and benefits. When one of the men objects and is critical of Suozzi's past record, the others sneer and intimidate the one critic. The critic backs down and nervously decides to support Tom Suozzi. The ad ends with one of the men slurping spaghetti from his plate. Put it all together and it is obvious the ad paints an 'unflattering picture' of all Italians."

In consultation with NYS CSJ Chairman, Louis Gallo, it was decided to send a joint email to *NEWSDAY* writer, Robert Brodsky, in order to respond to his article of 6/23/13 entitled "New Haber TV ad suggests Suozzi misused public money". In our letter, we stated that Thomas Suozzi, former Nassau County Executive, the highest ranking political office, had "done nothing in his political career to warrant the unfair, unjust and defamatory television ad insulting not only Suozzi, but millions of Italian Americans." We are not political so when an Italian American candidate for office, of any political party is misrepresented in a defamatory way during a political campaign, it is our duty and responsibility to respond.

For years, Italian Americans running for office have been disparaged by their opponents by misrepresenting them in ads as having connections to the Mafia and intimating that they are somehow connected to the mob thereby profiling us. While Brodsky's article basically reported the facts as is, many reporters and editors use supposedly "acceptable" terms to describe Italian Americans. Following, this email, I received phone calls from Laura Figueroa, a spokesperson from *NEWSDAY*, requesting that I verify the facts in the email and provide contact information for the Grand Lodge and the NYS CSJ. NYS OSIA President, Joseph Rondinelli, was interviewed in the Grand Lodge office in Bellmore, Long Island, New York which was shown on Wednesday 6/26, Thursday 6/27 and Friday 6/28 on Cablevision Channel 12. President Rondinelli, in the interview, also demanded that the controversial ad be "removed immediately and an apology issued." Together with NYS CSJ Chairman, Louis Gallo, the Grand Lodge sent out an emergency email to all lodges and officers requesting that an immediate campaign begin to eliminate the offending ad. Also on Wednesday, June 26th, there were two references to the OSIA in *NEWSDAY*. The first, in the column entitled "You Said It" whereby individuals are quoted who send emails in response to the issue and almost all were favorable, and again, in an "Opinion" article entitled, "Princesses, Paisans and Prejudice." Lane Filler, the author of the article stated, "The spot, with its "Sopranos" feel, has sparked the ire of both Nassau Democratic Chairman, Jay Jacobs, and the Italian fraternal organization Order Sons of Italy. And you have to wonder what Haber was thinking: Trying to win an election in Nassau County by insulting Italians is kind of like trying to win an election in Tel Aviv by ragging on Jews. Either Haber didn't think this through or he's realized what a terrible job Nassau County Executive is and is taking a dive." We were quoted in an article entitled "Italian Group Assails Ad" on Tuesday, June 25th, and again in an article in *NEWSDAY* of June 27th, entitled "Haber pulls Suozzi ad after controversy" after Adam Haber rescinded the ad and apologized. A big win for New York and all of us!! Congratulations to the NYS OSIA and the NYS CSJ!!

In addition to defamatory ads, recently we've seen an upswing in the attacks on our language, heritage and culture. Another example is National CSJ working in concert with the Grand Lodge of California and Immediate Past President, Maria Fassio Pignati. The Grand Lodge of California and the National CSJ were actively involved in fighting the **negative image of Christopher Columbus** when California Assemblyman Roger Hernandez (D-West Covina), 48th Assembly District, submitted a Native American Bill (AB55) that would replace Columbus Day (second Monday in October) with "Native American Day." This bill to recognize the "atrocities" committed against Native Americans and their removal and relocation from their ancestral lands by Columbus, was filled with inaccuracies and distortions. While we sympathize with Native Americans, with regard to their situation, we have the facts to prove that Columbus had nothing to do with the decimation of their population and culture. There are even articles blaming Columbus for AIDS. Letters/emails and phone calls were sent/made to all involved.

A well-organized plan of action was established including having membership sign an on-line petition, objecting to the bill and demanding its withdrawal. Italian Americans were asked to send emails or snail mail to the offending assemblyman with copies to other assemblymen in their districts. In California's case, another supportive individual, Ann Potenza, President of Federated Italo-Americans, also used her mailing list to send out emails. Senators and assemblymen were all contacted as were other public officials.

According to former President of the Grand Lodge of California, Maria Pignati, "...the bill is now AB55, version 98, amended 2/19/13. It will go back to the Committee on Appropriations, so it seems like it has not been passed/defeated yet. After communicating with Ann Potenza of the Federated Italo-Americans, President Pignati wrote a letter rescinding our opposition to the bill and supporting the new one. "While in California for the February Plenary Session, it was announced that the bill was eventually rescinded by Assemblyman Hernandez who called both former NYS CSJ Chairman, Rick Annichiarico and myself to let us know personally, that he had withdrawn the bill. The bill is now changed as was stated by Maria Pignati. Hernandez realized that there was a very large, voting population of Italian Americans and they were vocal as well. The irony to the story is that in 1998, then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, signed a resolution calling for the fourth Friday of each September to be named "American Indian Day". He hoped that this acknowledgement "would help to inform the general public about Indian heritage and the problems that are confronted by Indians in California" (from the Native American website). Tribes in California renewed their connections to the earth and kept the traditions of their ancestors. It was

established via Assembly Bill #1953 establishing it as a day of education to learn more about the culture, traditions and heritage of the California tribes. Reagan agreed to this day **not to replace Columbus Day**, but to acknowledge the contributions of our Native American population in addition to the contributions of Italians and Italian Americans on Columbus Day. Had he known, at that time, that there was a hidden agenda, he might have reconsidered his options. We must congratulate Grand Lodge of California Immediate Past President, Maria Pignati for her leadership on this vitally important issue and for the success in having AB55 changed. However, we must all be vigilant because this issue will crop up again and again and not just in California.

A third example of the cooperation between National CSJ and state CSJ's involves the Grand Lodge of Florida. I received a call from Ed Mottola, President of the Grand Lodge of Florida, who advised me that a Toyota dealership in Homosassa, Florida was showing a commercial featuring Gangster Puppets called "wiseguys" and having characters that look like *The Sopranos* character, Pauly Walnuts, even to his white hair. I contacted Toyota Corporate Headquarters and spoke to the National Customer Relations Representative who apologized profusely and advised him about National CSJ/OSIA, our goals and how offensive Italian Americans in Florida and the rest of the country felt about the defamatory ad. He investigated the ad and assigned a case number to our investigation. President Mottola then advised his membership to send emails and letters and to watch the local ads for Toyota. Although the ad was pulled, we had to constantly monitor this situation because the ads appeared again in a different location. John DiMola, then Florida CSJ Chairperson and President Mottola, helped monitor this defamatory ad.

Recently, the North Shore Public School System and its' Board of Education (BOE) removed the study of Italian from its' curriculum and replaced it with Mandarin Chinese, an alarming new trend in public education. According to the superintendent, Dr. Ed Melnick, the World Language Association (WLA) does not consider Italian to be among the top ten languages in the world. According to the WLA the ten most important languages by number of native speakers are: Mandarin, Spanish, English, Hindi, Arabic, Portuguese, Bengali, Russian, Japanese, and Punjabi. Districts are using these statistics together with the banner of the new Common Core Education sweeping the nation, to eliminate Italian in favor of Mandarin Chinese. This is, for the most part, happening without much fanfare, throughout the United States.

As this situation was coming to light, the National CSJ, working in concert with the NYS CSJ, at that time chaired by Rick Annichiarico, and the Grand Lodge of New York President, Thomas Lupo, sent an e-mail to Dr. Melnick, extolling the importance of the Italian Language. In the **North Shore Public School System**, Italian was eliminated in spite of the fact that Italian was the second highest enrolled language, with French and Latin being third and fourth, respectively. **This was and is discrimination at its worst!** The BOE voted in favor of the proposal to eliminate Italian in spite of the fact that this community, composed of Sea Cliff, Glen Head, Roslyn Harbor and parts of Glen Cove, Long Island, New York has a 35% Italian population and virtually no Asian population. Well over 700 people attended this BOE meeting with students, parents, business people and residents pleading for the return of their Italian language. I attended every BOE meeting within the district and meetings of a very organized community group called the **North Shore Reform Group**, composed of residents and businesses who fought back, helping to restore Italian to the curriculum and providing a model for other districts throughout the United States. This situation was a public relations nightmare for the district! Both Rick Annichiarico, NYCSJ Chairman and myself were interviewed by NEWSDAY with a photo shoot of residents with us discussing this situation with the BOE. This is a new national trend and if successful, will signal to districts struggling to make ends meet financially, to follow suit. Unfortunately, after being contacted by Fox 5 and Cablevision Channel 12, for interviews, the following day was the tragedy in Connecticut, and all their resources, understandably, went to Newtown. Although this was another major success for the National and NYS CSJ's, we must be very watchful of this new trend!

We are presently investigating the **Massapequa, NY Public School System** that eliminated Italian from the Middle School several years ago. Although Italian wasn't replaced at that time by Mandarin Chinese, it was recently added to the Middle School curriculum which now includes French, German and Mandarin Chinese. Without a middle school component, the high school program in Italian has become very weak with the majority of students continuing with French, German or Mandarin Chinese. The thought of introducing another language after two years of another language, is not appealing to most students.

Voters rarely attend Board of Education meetings, where many of these decisions are made. The strength of the North Shore School System was in the fact that its residents all attended every board meeting and made their voices heard. That same plan of action must be accomplished in Massapequa and Plainedge, adjoining districts, where the study of Italian is in jeopardy.

On the defamation front, there still is the need for constant monitoring. In an episode of "Mike and Molly" on WCBS, Channel 2, Italians were demeaned and vilified. Letters of protest were sent to CBS Channel 2 and the sponsors of the program. We have not had a response as of yet. The National CSJ has been fighting bias, bigotry and defamation as witnessed in our **Complaint Directory**. Thanks to the efforts of your National CSJ and our many CSJ Chairpeople and membership around the country, we can celebrate the fact that the reality series Jersey Shore ended. Unfortunately it lives on in reruns. Saturday Night Live has been contacted about a Sopranos-like skit involving characters who depict us in very negative ways. Movies abound with the Jersey Shore cast beginning production on a new movie. David O. Russell's Silver Linings Playbook, stars Robert DeNiro as Pat Solitano, a football crazed, down-on-his-luck bookie, whose son, Pat Jr., played by Bradley Cooper, has bi-polar disorder. The fact is that David O. Russell's real-life son has bi-polar disease, but he isn't Italian. Why make the characters Italian? As always, it's the profit motive. Joseph Gordon-Leavitt's Don Jon's Addiction and Sylvester Stallone's Bullet To The Head are self-explanatory. One of the most disturbing of the new movies is Nicky Deuce. Nickelodeon TV, an educational television network for children, is producing this film based on a children's book written by former cast member of the Sopranos, Steven Schirippa, and co-author Charles Flemming. Directed by Johathan A. Rosenbaum, the status of the film is still characterized as "pre-production." The film stars the late James Gandolfini as 'Bobby Eggs,' Steven Schirippa as 'Uncle Frankie,' Michael Imperiale as 'The Doctor,' Tony Sirico as 'Charlie Cement,' and others in similar roles. As you can see, it is a cast right out of the Sopranos.

We have deluged the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee with our request for a Forever Stamp in honor of Constantino Brumidi, the architect of the Rotunda, and posthumous recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's most prestigious commendation. Hopefully, by the time we gather together, we may be able to say that we have a **Brumidi Forever Stamp**. This could not have been accomplished without the organizational expertise of **Joseph N. Grano, Chairman of the Constantino Brumidi Society**. From a study conducted by the OSIA in 2003, the facts are that since 1869, there have been only 15 people of Italian heritage honored with postage stamps. While we may have been able to achieve small gains since then, there have been many more additions to the 2003 listing of 150 Black Americans, 36 Jewish Americans and 14 Hispanic Americans honored with postage stamps. We have heard from Bill Aiello, from the Fiorello LaGuardia Lodge #2867 in NY, who is spearheading a campaign to have a stamp created commemorating Italian Immigration. There are many stamps commemorating other countries' immigration, but none for Italian Immigration.

Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey was somewhat chagrined to find himself depicted on the cover of "Time" Magazine as "The Boss" in a black and white photo that made him look like a Soprano. After discussions with our National President, Joseph DiTrapani and a fax to Governor Christie's office offering to 'take on' the editors of "Time" on his behalf, it was decided that it was done with humor and should not be addressed. However, Governor Christie stated on the "Don Imus Show" that "...he might have to contact the anti-defamation group to protest." **I believe that this was a very positive statement from Gov. Christie about our CSJ!** We have contacted his office many times to show our support of his actions and to commend him for his support of developing a positive image of Italian Americans. We've supported his comments with regard to "Jersey Shore" and encouraged him to vote down a tax break of \$400,000 for the "Jersey Shore" production. He's heard from us about the \$30,000 fee Rutgers Student Association paid for Snooki of "Jersey Shore" to appear as a guest speaker. As you know, Gov. Christie has been very verbal about the negative image of New Jerseyites because of "Jersey Shore", "The Sopranos" and various negative depictions of Italian Americans in the media. With a mother who is Italian, Gov. Christie is very sensitive to the negative stereotyping of Italian Americans.

Our goals of fighting bias, bigotry and defamation against Italians and Italian Americans and promoting a positive image of Americans of Italian Heritage have been accomplished through our Complaint Directory and our many positive image programs including the Italian American Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Una Storia Segreta, the Holocaust Memorial Program, speaking engagements, positive

image materials, including posters, bookcovers, pamphlets and bookmarks and the publication of our CSJ section in the *Italian America* magazine. We need to utilize these programs around the country and if your Grand Lodge has not requested the original "Medal of Honor" program, or the "Una Storia Segreta", please speak to Sam Fumosa today.

Your National CSJ has responded to every incident involving bias, bigotry and defamation of Italian Americans whether in an ad, movie, television show or reality series, but we need every member to be involved. We cannot deny that there are those Italian Americans who make a profit on our negative image by acting, producing or directing these various media and also supporting these media but it is not enough to point the blame. Italian Americans can no longer sit back and by our silence, give tacit approval to this form of entertainment. I urge everyone reading this report to paraphrase "...if you see something, say something." It's that simple – e-mail, phone, write letters but do something – now!

As promised when I first became National CSJ President, materials including a tube of all of the positive image materials including posters, bookcovers, bookmarks and pamphlets were presented to every Grand Lodge President along with the TELLY Award-Winning video-documentary written and produced by the late National CSJ President Emeritus, John Dabbene, entitled "Italian-American Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor." The exhibit now includes the latest recipients: Hector A. Cafferata, Jared C. Monte, and Salvatore A. Giunta. It was a pleasure to meet Salvatore Giunta when he was honored at the NELA dinner in May 2011. All materials related to the Medal of Honor Program are presently being updated by the New York CSJ.

All Grand Lodge presidents also received new CSJ materials as they were published including the second Italian American Women's poster and the Christopher Columbus poster and bookmarks, geared to children. As with all of the CSJ materials presented at our sessions, we express our deepest gratitude to the NYS Grand Lodge and the NYS CSJ. There are also available three new posters, the first honoring crimefighters and memorializing those Italian Americans who serve in Law Enforcement and two honoring recipients of the NYS Literary Award in Memory of Pietro di Donato and John Fante. If you are a new president, and didn't receive the materials listed, please contact me at shaemmer@optonline.net and I'll make certain that you receive them.

Please don't forget that thanks to the efforts of NJ CSJ Chairperson, and National CSJ Vice President, Grace Olivo, we now have a Facebook page. Go into your Facebook page, type in OSIA National Commission for Social Justice, and you will be kept up-to-date on the happenings of the National CSJ.

At this time, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to members of the CSJ Executive Board: Grace Olivo, National CSJ Vice President, Joyce Ruisi Schmel, National CSJ Treasurer and Rosemary Feterik, National CSJ Recording Secretary for their support during my presidency. Thanks also to our Grand Lodge Presidents, their CSJ Chairpersons, Subordinate Lodges and all Local Lodge Liaisons throughout the country, who work tirelessly in serving the National CSJ. We join together to achieve our goals and promote the positive image of Italian Americans. Thank you all for your support of me and the National CSJ.

We again want to express our appreciation to National OSIA President, Joseph DiTrapani, National First Lady, Carol DiTrapani, NYS Past President, Salvatore Lanzilotta, Past NYS First Lady, Rae Lanzilotta, NYS OSIA Immediate Past President, Thomas Lupo, NYS Past First Lady, Barbara Lupo, and NYS OSIA President, Joseph Rondinelli and NYS First Lady, Joan Rondinelli, for their support and encouragement, both personally and professionally during the past four years.

We offer our deepest and sincerest appreciation to all of you for your continuous support of the National CSJ with your donations, e-mails and letters of support. Your donations during the year and at convention

help to fund the many positive image initiatives, projects, and continuous battle to fight bias, bigotry and defamation of Italians and Italian Americans. Your contributions are vitally important at this time, since very few grants have been made available to the National CSJ.

Always remember, that if you're a member of OSIA, you're also a member of the CSJ.

Fraternally,

Santina Haemmerle

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Goals of National CSJ (from National OSIA's website)

- The National CSJ is the anti-defamation branch of the OSIA, the oldest and largest national organization for men and women of Italian descent in the United States.
- The CSJ was founded in 1979 to fight the stereotyping of Italian Americans by the entertainment, advertising and media industries. It also collaborates with other groups to ensure that people of all races, religions and cultures are treated with dignity and respect.
- The CSJ monitors the entertainment, advertising and news industries, contacts offending parties and alerts other Italian American organizations, e-mail networks and concerned individuals to the problem so that they can also take action.
- Through its Positive Image Program, the CSJ regularly informs the media and general public about Italian American achievements, contributions, history and culture.
- As part of its Positive Image Program, the CSJ conducts research, produces studies, teaching tools, pamphlets, exhibits and other materials on the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans.
- The CSJ conducts campaigns at both the community and the national levels that support cultural and social issues of importance to Italian Americans (Legislation, commemorative stamps, Columbus Day/Heritage Month, etc.)
- To achieve its objectives, the CSJ engages in community and government relations as well as in grassroots campaigns and fund-raising efforts. However, given its non-profit status, the CSJ cannot offer legal advice or assistance in lawsuits.

I. Columbus Bashing

Columbus Day has become the victim of political correctness. With Columbus Day 2013 around the corner, we need to be vigilant in making sure that incidents are reported to the police and that our CSJ's respond to every incident of malicious vandalism. Pennsylvania and Connecticut are among the ten states with the most Italian American population, according to the Census Bureau. Unfortunately, both states had bias incidents in 2012. Witness these incidents:

- Hazleton, Pennsylvania - On Columbus Day, 10/8/12 vandals sprayed a red liquid over a Hazleton, Pennsylvania statue of Christopher Columbus. The base of the statue was painted with the words, "Indigenous Solidarity DAY (sic)," as well as peace and anarchy symbols. Vandals splashed the liquid on the bronze statue and the face was spray-painted white. A display of a red, white and green floral wreath placed on the monument was knocked off its display stand and flowers were strewn everywhere. Local police have not been able to arrest those involved.
- New Haven, Connecticut - The October, 2012 Columbus Day parade was marred by protestors holding signs saying that the holiday should be abolished.
- ECards - advertising@someecards.com - This on-line greeting card website has the absolutely worst trashing of Columbus. Sayings such as "Let's celebrate an Italian man who spread more even more STD's than the cast of *Jersey Shore* and "I can't even imagine how many indigenous people Columbus would have murdered if he didn't get Columbus Day off." There are twelve such cards. Please contact feedback@someecards.com with your comments.
- The New York Times - The New York Times included a nice article on page one about the celebration of Columbus Day on Monday, Oct. 8th, 2012. Nevertheless, next to that article, it featured another article about corruption in a highway project in Calabria, Italy. An email complaint letter was sent to the editor stating how they diminished Columbus Day by placement of the aforementioned article. A more positive and balanced article on Italy's attempts to deal with its' economic and immigration issues would have been more positive.

II. Legislation

California Assembly Bill (AB55) to Disband Columbus Day Renaming It "Native American Day"

(Please see our letter plus the text of AB55 contained in the Addendum)

Update

According to Immediate Past President of the Grand Lodge of California, Maria Pignati, "...the bill is now AB55, version 98, amended 2/19/13. It will go back to the Committee on

Appropriations, so it seems like it has not been passed/defeated yet. After communicating with Ann Potenza of the Federated Italo-Americans, President Pignati wrote a letter rescinding our opposition to the bill and supporting the new one. " While in California for the February Plenary Session, it was announced that the bill was eventually rescinded by Assemblyman Hernandez who called both former NYS CSJ Chairman, Rick Annichiarico and myself to let us know personally, that he had withdrawn the bill. The bill is now changed as was stated by Maria Pignati. Hernandez realized that there was a very large, voting population of Italian Americans and they were vocal as well. The irony to the story is that in 1998, then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, signed a resolution calling for the fourth Friday of each September to be named "American Indian Day". He hoped that this acknowledgement "would help to inform the general public about Indian heritage and the problems that are confronted by Indians in California" (from the Native American website). Tribes in California renewed their connections to the earth and kept the traditions of their ancestors. It was established via Assembly Bill #1953 establishing it as a day of education to learn more about the culture, traditions and heritage of the California tribes. Reagan agreed to this day **not to replace Columbus Day**, but to acknowledge the contributions of our Native American population in addition to the contributions of Italians and Italian Americans on Columbus Day. Had he known, at that time, that there was a hidden agenda, he might have reconsidered his options. We must congratulate Grand Lodge of California Immediate Past President, Maria Pignati for her leadership on this vitally important issue and for the success in having AB55 changed. However, we must all be vigilant because this issue will crop up again and again and not just in California.

California Assembly Bill (AB55) was proposed by Assemblyman Roger Hernandez, 48th Assembly District, disbanding Columbus Day renaming it "Native American Day". National CSJ joined the host of Italian American organizations who have sent letters of protest to Assemblyman Hernandez and copies to Assemblyman Michael Gatto and Ann Potenza, Federated President.

According to the wording in the bill, it recognizes the "genocide" and other atrocities committed against Native Americans and their removal and relocation from their lands attributed to Columbus. Please see a copy of this bill in the Addendum to this report. In 1998, then Governor Reagan signed a resolution calling for the fourth Friday of each September to be "American Indian Day". He hoped that this acknowledgement "would help to inform the general public about Indian heritage and the problems that are confronted by Indians in California" (from the Native American website). Tribes in California renewed their connections to the earth and kept the traditions of their ancestors. It was established via Assembly Bill #1953 establishing it as a day of education and learning more about the culture, traditions and heritage of the California tribes. Reagan agreed to this day not to replace Columbus Day, but to acknowledge the contributions of our Native American population in addition to the contributions of Italians and Italian Americans on Columbus Day. Had he known, at that time, that there was a hidden agenda, he might have reconsidered his options.

While we sympathize with the plight of Native Americans, with regard to their situation, we have the facts to prove that Columbus had nothing to do with the decimation of their population and culture. We have reports that Columbus is being "tried" and "convicted" in our schools of everything from introducing AIDS to our country to bringing about the "swine flu". Please see our letters to Assemblyman Hernandez, Assemblyman Gatto and Ann Potenza, Federation President, as well as the actual bill in the Addendum. Add your voices to ours.

The Grand Lodge of California Plan: (if this issue arises in your Grand Lodge, please adapt the California Plan to suit your situation)

- Sign an on-line petition. Enter the following: http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Stop_Bill_AB55_a_move_to_disband_Columbus_Day/?kgSukdb. Please enter as shown. Scroll down to the petition instructions.
- Email or snail mail your own letter of protest to Assemblyman Roger Hernandez, District Office, 100 N. Barranca, Suite 895, West Covina, CA 91791. Email: assemblymember.hernandez@asm.ca.gov

- Send a copy to Assemblyman Michael Gatto, District Office, 300 East Magnolia, Suite 504, Burbank, CA 91502. Email: Justin.hager@asm.ca.gov
- Send a copy to Federated President, Ann Potenza, 16217 Kittridge Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406
- Send a copy to Senator Cathleen Galgiani, Capitol Office, State Capitol, Room 4082, Sacramento, CA 95814. Email: senator.galgiani@senate.ca.gov
- Email your own assemblyman and other public officials at all levels.

III. Kudos

- NYS CSJ - NYS CSJ Chairman, Lou Gallo, together with NYS OSIA President, Joseph Rondinelli and National CSJ for leading the fight to rescind a negative political ad on Cablevision Channel 12 and the successful fight to remove a foodtruck named “the Wandering Dago” from the Saratoga Racetrack.
- Grand Lodge of California IPP Maria Pignati, CSJ Chairman, Tony Ricevuto and National CSJ who fought back when a bill to abolish Columbus Day and replace it with Native American Day was rescinded.
- Bill Maher – On *RealTime With Bill Maher*, Jan. 25, 2012, he introduced Democratic House Leader, Nancy Pelosi, with a wonderful and enthusiastic welcome. He stated, “Our featured guest, is the First Woman Democratic House Leader, First Californian, and First Italian American Woman Speaker of the House.” Whatever you may think of his politics, he gave Nancy Pelosi a wonderful introduction. Thanks to Grace Olivo, National CSJ Vice President, for submitting this information.
- North Shore District Reform Group – see more under Complaint Directory – Education. Congratulations to the North Shore District Reform Group who together National CSJ and NYS CSJ under the NYS OSIA IPP Thomas Lupo and then NYS CSJ Chairman, Rick Annichiarico, fought back when their school district eliminated the study of Italian replacing it with Mandarin Chinese and brought back the study of Italian to their school district.
- Jersey Shore - Finally through all of our combined efforts, the reality series Jersey Shore is finally off the air. Jersey Shore was the topic of most of my previous National CSJ reports with many letters being sent and three meetings with executives of MTV in New York City. We succeeded in have the writers cease using ‘guidos and guidettes’ in describing the characters and having the Italian flag, painted on the entire garage, removed. Unfortunately, it lives on in reruns. A planned movie about the characters hasn’t materialized.
- The Guineas Show – Update – In the July 2012 Plenary Report, the CSJ noted that it was successful in having this negative image video removed from Blip TV on the internet, but unfortunately, the video was uploaded onto YouTube.com. NYS CSJ also reported that the CSJ launched a major campaign to contact the advertisers of this show.

NYS CSJ Webmaster, Terry Tanzer, noticed that advertisements were being used to introduce segments of the video, so he jotted down the name of the sponsor for each segment. He prepared a letter to the sponsors that he recorded stating that their ads were being used to introduce a video program that was defaming Italian Americans. Companies removed their ads telling him that they bought time from the producers but didn’t know when their ads were being aired. Shortly afterwards, YouTube removed the Guineas series from its website.

- Lt. Joseph Petrosino Park - (Please see Complaint Directory under heading Bias and Bigotry in City Agencies) From past NYS CSJ Chairman, Rick Annichiarico: Recently members of the Joseph Petrosino Lodge #285 met with the Parks Department and were successful in persuading the Department to change its plans to erect “The Glass Sea” in Petrosino Park. In addition, the lodge received a favorable response to their suggestion that the Department of Parks erect some positive image exhibits in the park in the near future. Bravo!
- Kudos to Tony Ricevuto, CSJ Chairman of the Grand Lodge of California for his timely reports on Las Vegas Museums and the California Assembly Bill AB#55. Thanks also to Rick Annichiarico, past NYS CSJ Chairman for his efforts to fight bias, bigotry and defamation.

IV. Positive Image

- Background Information Regarding Italian Commemorative Stamps
Update on the Brumidi Forever Stamp

We still don't have a Brumidi stamp. Constantino Brumidi, the Italian born artist of the U. S. Capitol, deserves to receive a forever first-class stamp from the U.S. Postal Service. Joseph Grano, Chair of the Constantino Brumidi Society requested that we contact the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 225-3121 and ask the staffer who responds to connect you with your House of Representatives member on Monday, July 29, 2013, which we did, and ask to be put in touch with your representative. (To find your representative, go to <http://www.house.gov>.) When you get through to the office, identify yourself as a constituent and ask the staffer to tell your representative to co-sponsor H. Res. 101 (House Resolution 101) which advises the U.S. Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp for Brumidi and his greatest work of art –*The Apotheosis of Washington* in the dome of the U.S. Capitol. We are asking that a Brumidi Forever stamp be issued in 2015, the 150th anniversary of the Apotheosis' completion. Please consider doing this as individuals this year.

The following is an update from Joe Grano:

Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia introduced **H. Res. 101** on March 5 and the resolution after nearly five months has, as of Friday, only 6 co-sponsors. (Their names are published below). While I am most grateful to Ms. Norton's for introducing the resolution -- to have only six co-sponsors after nearly five months, is totally inadequate and probably means that the resolution will never pass. If everyone who receives this message were to call their representative this week, I am sure that we would have 50 co-sponsors by the end of the week. Just one call to a representative from a constituent can result in a co-sponsorship. (I am sending out several thousand e-mail messages throughout the United States, covering many congressional districts).

It is very important to note that the U.S Postal Service is overseen by Congress and it will pay strict attention to any recommendation of the Congress, including what stamps should be issued. Please make your call ASAP, as the House will go into recess this Friday for five weeks and no co-sponsorships can be added during that time. After you have made your call, to see if your representative has co-sponsored, go to the Library of Congress Website *THOMAS* and type in the key word *Brumidi*.

Thank you for your support. Remember – if a Brumidi stamp is issued, it will be because you did something positive to bring it about.

Joseph N. Grano, Chair
The Constantino Brumidi Society
Washington, D.C.
Tel. 202-364-2526

COSPONSORS(6)

Rep Israel, Steve [NY-3] - 3/12/2013
Rep King, Peter T. [NY-2] - 3/13/2013
Rep Marino, Tom [PA-10] - 4/15/2013
Rep Tonko, Paul [NY-20] - 6/3/2013
Rep Hanna, Richard L. [NY-22] - 6/4/2013
Rep Wolf, Frank R. [VA-10] - 7/25/2013

- US Postal Service (USPS) Stamp Commemorating Italian Immigration

Bill Aiello (bb4ok@verizon.net) is a member of the Fiorello LaGuardia Lodge #2867 in New York and is passionate about establishing a stamp commemorating Italian Immigration. Apparently there are stamps honoring the immigration of most nationalities but none for the largest wave of immigration, Italians. At our last plenary session, we distributed pre-addressed postcards, provided by Mr. Aiello, to send to the USPS. Apparently when postcards come from around the country, our issues are more seriously considered.

Beginning in 1890, over 30 million Italians came to the United States. Most were farmers but some worked in blue collar and lower level white collar jobs. Many Italian immigrants did not intend to stay in the U.S. – called Sojourners or birds of passage. Many lived in houses that were unfit for human habitation. This stamp will honor the sacrifices of our immigrant parents and/or grandparents.

V. Complaint Directory

Recent Complaint Issues

- New York- Derogatory Cablevision TV Political Ad

Recently, we were notified of an issue in **New York** regarding defamation of an Italian American political candidate. In Nassau County, a candidate for the Democratic position of Nassau County Executive, Adam Haber, released his second, thirty second television ad, distributed to Cablevision Channel 12, the leading Long Island cable station, depicting his Democratic opponent, former Nassau County Executive, Thomas Suozzi, as a “Sopranos” like hack. Furthermore, he stated that he had no intention of removing the defamatory ad.

No matter what your politics, the ad depicting obviously loud, boisterous Italian men sitting around a restaurant table with a large “Cinzano” sign above their heads, eating and drinking wine while discussing how they benefited from Suozzi’s misuse of public resources, intimated that public resources were used inappropriately by Suozzi and hinted at his connection to the mob. In a letter to NYS OSIA lodge presidents and membership, NYS OSIA President, Joseph Rondinelli, stated that, “The insinuation in the ad is that they will be supporting him because during his administration, they received lucrative pay raises and benefits. When one of the men objects and is critical of Suozzi’s past record, the others sneer and intimidate the one critic. The critic backs down and nervously decides to support Tom Suozzi. The ad ends with one of the men slurping spaghetti from his plate. Put it all together and it is obvious the ad paints an ‘unflattering picture’ of all Italians.”

In consultation with NYS CSJ Chairman, Louis Gallo, it was decided to send a joint email to *NEWSDAY* writer, Robert Brodsky, in order to respond to his article of 6/23/13 entitled “New Haber TV ad suggests Suozzi misused public money”. In our letter, we stated that Thomas Suozzi, former Nassau County Executive, the highest ranking political office, had “done nothing in his political career to warrant the unfair, unjust and defamatory television ad insulting not only Suozzi, but millions of Italian Americans.” We are not political so when an Italian American candidate for office, of any political party is misrepresented in a defamatory way during a political campaign, it is our duty and responsibility to respond.

For years, Italian Americans running for office have been disparaged by their opponents by misrepresenting them in ads as having connections to the Mafia and intimating that they are somehow connected to the mob thereby profiling us. While Brodsky’s article basically reported the facts as is, many reporters and editors use supposedly “acceptable” terms to describe Italian Americans. Following, this email, I received phone calls from Laura Figueroa, a spokesperson from *NEWSDAY*, requesting that I verify the facts in the email and provide contact information for the Grand Lodge and the NYS CSJ. NYS OSIA President, Joseph Rondinelli, was interviewed in the Grand Lodge office in Bellmore, Long Island, New York which was shown on Wednesday 6/26, Thursday 6/27 and Friday 6/28 on Cablevision Channel 12. President Rondinelli, in the interview, also demanded that the controversial ad be “removed immediately and an apology issued.” Together with NYS CSJ Chairman, Louis Gallo, the Grand Lodge sent out an emergency email to all lodges and officers requesting that an immediate campaign begin to eliminate the offending ad. Also on Wednesday, June 26th, there were two references to the OSIA in *NEWSDAY*. The first, in the column entitled “You Said It” whereby individuals are quoted who send emails in response to the issue and almost all were favorable, and again, in an “Opinion” article entitled, “Princesses, Paisans and Prejudice.” Lane Filler, the author of the article stated, “The spot, with its “Sopranos” feel, has sparked the ire of both Nassau Democratic Chairman, Jay Jacobs, and the Italian fraternal organization Order Sons of Italy. And you have to wonder what Haber was thinking: Trying to win an election in Nassau County by insulting Italians is kind of

like trying to win an election in Tel Aviv by ragging on Jews. Either Haber didn't think this through or he's realized what a terrible job Nassau County Executive is and is taking a dive." We were quoted in an article entitled "Italian Group Assails Ad" on Tuesday, June 25th, and again in an article in *NEWSDAY* of June 27th, entitled "Haber pulls Suozzi ad after controversy" after Adam Haber rescinded the ad and apologized. A big win for New York and all of us!! Congratulations to the NYS OSIA and the NYS CSJ!!

- **"The Wandering Dago" Foodtruck at Saratoga Racetrack, New York**

Recently, there was an additional issue regarding a food truck named "The Wandering Dago" which was denied acceptance to Saratoga Racetrack because of the negative connotation of the word "dago" and the efforts of the NY Grand Lodge President, Joseph Rondinelli and the NYS CSJ Chairman, Louis Gallo. The Plan: An email blast to all members and circulation on social media. We were even written up in the *NY Times* with regard to this issue.

Italian Language Threatened: Italian Americans Fight Back To Protect The Teaching of Italian

- **North Shore School District (NSSD) Proposal Replaces Italian With Mandarin Chinese**

At Board of Education Meeting on Nov. 29, 2012, Dr. Edward Melnick, Superintendent of Schools, announced that the North Shore School District would be introducing the study of Mandarin Chinese as part of its World Language initiative beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. However, his plans were to phase out the Italian Language Program replacing it with Mandarin Chinese.

How It Began: On Sunday evening, December 9, 2012, I received a phone call from OSIA members Angelo and Kathryn Grande, friends from St. John's University, residents of Seacliff, and individuals who helped to bring the Italian Language Program into the North Shore School District some ten years before. Kathryn, a former teacher and North Shore Board of Education member, and Angelo, a teacher in the North Shore High School, had worked tirelessly to introduce the Italian program in this district and were so disheartened that at a poorly attended BOE meeting, the Mandarin Chinese initiative of Dr. Melnick's was proposed. Unfortunately, the North Shore School District and all of its residents, suffered tremendous damage due to Hurricane Sandy, and, in fact, the Grandes lost their Seacliff home and were living elsewhere. In spite of this, they and many other residents attended every BOE meeting. The Mandarin proposal was discussed by the BOE, whose members were commissioned to represent the will of the community, and voting was set for the following BOE meeting. This was accomplished in spite of the fact that the district had a 35% Italian population. It showed a complete disregard for the will of the community, their concerns, interests and wishes.

Prior To The Meeting: Rick Annichiarico, New York CSJ Chairman, was also notified of this situation and we joined forces working closely together to bring about a positive solution to this serious issue. That week, National and NYS CSJ's sent e-mails to Dr. Edward Melnick and Members of the Board of Education of the North Shore School District, composed of the communities of Glen Head, Old Brookville, Roslyn Harbor, Greenvale, Seacliff, Glenwood Landing and some areas of Glen Cove, protesting his elimination of the Italian Language Program in his district and replacing it with Mandarin Chinese.

We protested his untimely proposal especially questioning the haste with which this proposal was made. He was told that "Italian Americans do not take lightly to the elimination of their language, heritage and culture when Italian is on the top ten list of the most lucrative languages to study. In the case of Dr. Melnick's school district, student enrollment in Italian was second only to Spanish with French and Latin, a poor third and fourth. If this is not discrimination, then I don't know what is."

This district presently offers four foreign languages: Spanish, Italian, French and Latin. Dr. Melnick's plans were to phase in Mandarin funding it by eliminating the Italian Language Program, not French or Latin, but the second highest enrolled language. Italian is presently being

taught in grades 6-12. If this effort was successful, there would be districts all over Long Island, New York State and the United States, eliminating Italian Language programs in favor of implementing Mandarin Chinese. Since that time, we've discovered that the Chinese are providing funds to school districts to implement Mandarin.

The next school board meeting was scheduled for December 13th, 2012 at the Seacliff School. At that time, the BOE would vote on the Mandarin phasing-in proposal and the elimination of the Italian Program. Prior to the BOE meeting, the NYS CSJ emailed members of the American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI) on Long Island at the high school and college level. CSJ wanted to establish and maintain an on-line dialogue about this issue in order to receive their input. Press Release packages were e-mailed by the NYS CSJ to news desks at Newsday and News 12 several days before the meeting.

The First Board of Education Meeting: The Dec. 13th BOE meeting was standing-room only. Most of the students of Italian and their parents and several teachers and administrators were present. I attended, along with NYS CSJ Chairman, Rick Annichiarico, Aurora O'Brien, IPP of AATI, and several members of the CSJ Executive Committee. John Laruccia, Angelo and Kathryn Grande and other members of the Loggia Glen Gove were in attendance also. A Newsday reporter and photographer were present to cover the meeting. We met, prior to this meeting, at the Seacliff Bagel Shop, whose owner opened the shop for members of the CSJ and both Rick and I were interviewed by Newsday and a photo shoot was also completed. (See copy of NEWSDAY article)

Before the vote on the Mandarin issue, the BOE permitted public comments with regard to this issue, whether or not you lived in the district. Both Rick and I both made statements in opposition to this move. Fortunately, almost all who wanted to speak were allowed to do so. John Laruccia (NEWSDAY, Dec. 14, 2012) opened the discussion with a very well-prepared statement. Parents, students, business owners and other residents made intelligent and respectful statements and persuasive arguments against the Mandarin phase-in proposal. Rick Annichiarico and I both made statements on behalf of both NYS CSJ and National CSJ. Students even had petitions signed by all students of Italian and had tears in their eyes when asking that Italian not be eliminated. Many spoke about how the study of Italian had changed their lives and their experiences abroad in Italy would never be forgotten. Unfortunately, all was to no avail.

At this point, we should acknowledge that the Italian community had no objection to the introduction of the Mandarin language in the district. However, we did object to the decision by the BOE to implement this program at the expense of the Italian program, which was a very strong and popular program. Dr. Melnick threw the community a "bone" so to speak and offered an optional course in Italian Culture. The community wasn't buying it.

The Decision: After a long, arduous and at the end, contentious meeting, **Dr. Melnick announced that in spite of all of the discussion against the proposal, the BOE voted to approve the measure and announced that they were still voting in favor of replacing Italian with Mandarin. They didn't even have the courtesy to go into executive session to "make a pretense" of having heard what the community so soundly expressed. Their decision brought much disapproval from the audience. Individuals felt that their impassioned voices had not been heard and that the BOE had already made up their minds prior to the meeting.**

Before the adjournment of the meeting, Aurora O'Brien, AATI IPP, discussed the fact that eliminating the program from Grades 6-8 would preclude most students of Italian from taking the Advanced Placement (AP) Exam in Italian. She further discussed that students must have at least six years of Italian to be adequately prepared to meet the rigorous AP requirements. She reiterated that much time, effort and funding was expended by the Italian Government and a number of Italian Organizations to retain the AP Program. (See past Plenary Session Reports)

After making the announcement, Dr. Melnick said that he would re-examine the district budget to see if they could restore the Italian language in grades 9-12, but didn't sound hopeful. Discouraged students, parents, educators, and business owners disconsolately left the meeting well after midnight.

What Happened: Because of the efforts of the CSJ, the following day the NSSD had a public relations nightmare on their hands. A very negative article appeared in NEWSDAY with a photo of John Laruccia arguing with a BOE member about their participation in the destruction of the Italian Language Program. Rick Annichiarico was quoted in the article and a fair representation of the 12/13/12 BOE was presented. The CSJ was contacted by various media outlets including Fox 5, Cablevision Channel 12, Fios and others. Unfortunately, on Dec. 14, 2012, the terrible shootings took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and all the resources of the media outlets, understandably, went to Connecticut.

Dr. Melnick emailed a constituent the day after the first board meeting stating that he may have misjudged the impact of his proposal. On the following day, Saturday, another constituent was told that he may have to reconsider his decision and keep Italian in grades 9-12 in the face of community opposition. The following week, he indicated via e-mail to some Italian American community leaders in the district that he was asked to reconsider his recommendation for the implementation of the World Language Program (Mandarin Chinese) by members of his own BOE and community leaders. Dr. Melnick replied and stated that the Board would revisit this discussion at the next BOE meeting scheduled for Jan. 3, 2013 which both Rick and I attended.

The Second Board of Education Meeting: Having arrived there at 7:30PM for the 8:00PM meeting, we waited while the BOE went through their entire agenda until 11PM when the topic of eliminating the Italian program was discussed. To an auditorium filled to capacity, Dr. Melnick described several new options for consideration. He also stated that he seriously misjudged the needs of the community, even if it wasn't necessarily the best thing for the students. How condescending! The most viable of the plans was to introduce Mandarin Chinese to Kindergarten through Second Grades; Third Grade through Fifth Grade, the choice of Mandarin or Spanish and offer Sixth through Twelfth Grades **the option of Spanish, Mandarin, Italian, French and Latin with Sixth Grade having an exploratory program in Italian for only the 2013-2014 school year.**

Many of the parents and students, educators and members of the community including the very vocal North Shore Reform Group, led by attorney Vito Palmeri, respectfully, intelligently and forthright discussed the events preceding this BOE meeting and said that if the community's needs weren't met, they would have to reconsider their support of the budget when voting takes place in May especially if the Italian program isn't part of the budget. They also presented the BOE with a signed petition showcasing the mission and demands of the North Shore Reform Group when the district's Mandarin phase-in was announced. (Please see ad from The North Shore District Reform Group in the Addendum.) **Demanding that the Italian language program be reinstated, Mr. Palmeri stated that it was the group's expectation that the BOE members remember their responsibility to the constituents who elected them and requiring that they make educational policy decisions that make sense and guaranteeing that such decisions are consistent with the community's.** While members of the BOE praised Dr. Melnick for his restoration proposal, many in the audience were appalled. He created the problem in the first place and now he was being praised for finding a solution to the problem.

When I spoke, I discussed the importance of having a Middle School (grades 6th, 7th and 8th) Italian component. I also discussed the difficulty of the Mandarin language and how children in Kindergarten through Second Grade, are having enough difficulty learning English especially under the new Common Core Guidelines demanded by the State of New York. In addition, I discussed why the district wasn't offering Italian in the Elementary School since I agreed with the Superintendent that beginning language instruction is very important in elementary school. I also mentioned that I started an Italian Language,

Culture and Heritage Club in my school, Parkway Elementary School in East Meadow, New York which has a membership of over 100 students from grades Two Through Five for the past eleven years. Students from all cultures attend and most continue with Italian in Middle School and High School.

Italian is the preferred language of the district and parents and students are being forced to have their children study Mandarin. **The reality is also that most students, having had Mandarin and Spanish, are highly unlikely to begin a new language in Sixth Grade, thereby making this proposal a self-fulfilling prophesy almost guaranteeing that Italian will not be chosen by the students.** Parents and community members echoed their concerns about their young children being forced to study a language they would never use, much less become fluent. Many parents stated that their children speak Italian at home and need to have Italian in the elementary schools. Non-Italian parents also wanted their children to learn Italian because of its similarity to Spanish.

The North Shore Reform Group: NYS Past CSJ Chairman, Rick Annichiarico and I attended meetings held at Loggia Glen Cove conducted by a newly formed group of Italian American community members living in the NSSD. This group is called the North Shore Reform Group. The purpose of this group is to monitor the activities of the NSSD BOE and organize to restore the previous status of the Italian Language Program and to guarantee its continuance. The reform group prepared a petition calling for the return of the Italian Language Program and created several committees including fundraising, school board elections, membership, school budget, legal services, public relations, information and research and other such committees needed to achieve their goals. **The reform group expressed its appreciation to the NYS and National CSJ for their help and welcomed our continued participation.**

The following is from the North Shore District Reform Group website:

Who We Are: "We are a group of concerned community members who support fiscally sound school budgets, volunteer within our schools and have now united and formed a civic organization that will participate and interact with our elected BOE members when important decisions are being made that impact our children, our schools, our property taxes and ultimately the value of our homes."

Why We Exist: "We exist because for too long we have been absent from the process when important decisions were being made that affect all tax paying homeowners. Now we seek to be more meaningfully involved and to proactively partake in the "shared vision" of the District and the community.

Our Goal: "Our goal is to be the active voice in the community in order to ensure that the Superintendent and the Board of Education's (BOE) policies address our children's educational needs while remaining fiscally responsible and consider the interests, values, and concerns of the North Shore School District Residents.

How Can You Get Involved And Stay Informed: "Add your email address to our contact list at nseducationreform@gmail.com. There is no cost involved. Through this avenue, you can have your voice heard and stay informed. As individuals we have rights, but as a group we have a united voice with the power to effect change.

Why Study Italian: (an excerpt from our letter to Dr. Melnick (see entire letter in Addendum)

In 2008, when New York City Mayor Bloomberg issued Executive Order 120 calling for city-wide language access for approximately 1.8 million people in NYC alone with limited skills in English, among the six languages were French, Creole, Italian, and Russian. Where the teaching of Italian is concerned, I can advise you that more and more students are taking Italian because of its importance to the financial, medical, legal and educational fields. Many of our districts throughout the state of New York have also faced the same challenges the North Shore School District is facing, but eliminating the language program in Italian was not one of them. They

found solutions other than eliminating these important languages. They cut administrative positions and other measures and kept the language programs in Italian for their students in middle and high school. With creativity, we are certain that you can find other ways to reduce spending. How can you eliminate one of the most important and influential languages taught in our schools?

From a study at Indiana University, I would like to provide you with the following information. Did you know that Italian majors pursue careers in many fields including education, business, computer programming and web design, law, public relations, journalism, telecommunications, arts administration, publishing, library science, politics, or public and environmental affairs, to name just a few. Some use their language skills in order to enter government employment or the military. In all situations, students report back to us that their training in Italian significantly enhanced their academic and professional opportunities. Italian is spoken by 55 million people in Italy and 62 million people throughout the world. As you probably know, Italy has the 7th largest economy in the world and is a major force politically in Europe.

We underscore the importance of the Italian language to the field of communication, where knowledge of Italian helps to improve knowledge of writing and speaking skills in English; art and culture, where knowledge of Italian helps in appreciating the beauty of Italian literature, theatre, opera and films; business, where knowledge of Italian is essential as more and more businesses are becoming global by opening new offices throughout the world (Six of the 100 biggest global companies have headquarters in Italy and Italy is the world's fifth largest industrial producer of goods.); government, where knowledge of Italian is especially important to the fields of diplomacy and trade – the federal government is always seeking qualified individuals with Italian language skills for international conferences and negotiations; research, where knowledge of Italian is necessary for academic, business or social research; travel, where knowledge of Italian is instrumental when traveling to Italy and experiencing the Italian culture and finally, learning Italian brings great satisfaction and confidence to students which brings about personal growth.

Bias and Bigotry in Magazines

- Time Magazine

Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey was somewhat chagrined to find himself depicted on the cover of "Time" Magazine as "The Boss" in a black and white photo that made him look like a Soprano or mob boss. (Please see photo in Addendum.) After discussions with our National President, Joseph DiTrapani and a fax to Governor Christie's office offering to 'take on' the editors of "Time" on his behalf, it was decided that it was done with humor and should not be addressed. However, Governor Christie stated on the "Don Imus Show" that "...he might have to contact the anti-defamation group to protest." I believe that this was a very positive statement from Gov. Christie about our CSJ! We have contacted his office many times to show our support of his actions and to commend him for his support of developing a positive image of Italian Americans. We've supported his comments with regard to "Jersey Shore" and encouraged him to vote down a film tax credit of \$420,000 to the company that produces "Jersey Shore". He's heard from us about the \$32,000 fee Rutgers Student Association paid for Snooki of "Jersey Shore" to appear as a guest speaker. As you know, Gov. Christie has been very verbal about the negative image of New Jerseyites because of "Jersey Shore", "The Sopranos" and various negative depictions of Italian Americans in the media. With a mother who is Italian, Gov. Christie is very sensitive to the negative stereotyping of Italian Americans.

- NY Post Columnist, Andrea Peyser Andrea Peyser wrote on January 19th, 2012 that "Italy has much to be ashamed of" because of the actions of the Costa Concordia Liner's Captain, Francesco Schettino. National CSJ sent an e-mail to Ms. Peyser, who can be reached at andrea.peyser@nypost.com, advising her that "Italians have no reason to be ashamed since the Captain does not represent all Italians." However, the true character and the incredible humanity of the Italian people were evidenced by the residents of Giglio, who took many of the survivors into their homes and shops to comfort them, treat their injuries and provide them with food and shelter. I contacted the NYS CSJ President at that time, Stella Grillo, with regard to this issue, since it involved a local newspaper. Ms. Peyser received an e-mail from us letting her know that "Italy has

much to be proud of and that she should be ashamed for demeaning an entire country for the actions of one individual.

Andrea Peyser has called me for my opinion on various issues such as the “Brooklyn 11223” She wanted to know if I felt the same way towards this show as I did towards *Jersey Shore*. In the interview about this show, I told her that I was born in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn and so was most of my hard-working, education oriented family and very sensitive to the way Italian Americans are portrayed in all aspects of the media. So she knows who we are but rarely publishes our thoughts about these shows.

Bias and Bigotry in Advertising

- The Muller Insurance Company of Hoboken, New Jersey – I was shocked when I saw this commercial on TV. The Muller Insurance Company produced a commercial showing two obviously Italian mobsters knocking at the door of a private home. It then shows a little girl answering the door and being asked if her mommy and daddy are home. The feisty little girl answers, “Who’s asking?” The men respond that they want to ask them about “protection.” She then asks if they mean fire, flood or liability and they respond, “Yeah, something like that.” The little girl then points to a sign on the door indicating that the house is protected by the Muller Insurance Company and adds, “So we don’t need any insurance...Capeesh?” Again, emails were sent by NY CSJ and National CSJ complaining about the depiction of the men as stereotypical Italian Americans, especially using the Italian word “capeesh” a distortion of the word “capisce” and using an impressionable child in this scenario.

Bias and Bigotry in the Movies

- “Don Jon’s Addiction - Voltage Pictures, Written by Joseph Gordon Leavitt. Leavitt
Described in “Variety” as an endearingly masturbatory look at how a culture of objectification erodes our capacity for intimacy.” Leavitt plays a lothario whose “insatiable appetite for Internet porn stands in the way of a meaningful relationship.” Also starring Scarlett Johansson, Julianne Moore, Tony Danza and others. Letters have been sent to express our dissatisfaction with the depiction of Italians in such a negative way.
- Bullet To The Head – Warner Brothers Pictures, Starring Sylvester Stallone
Sylvester Stallone stars as Jimmy Bobo, “...a New Orleans hit man who enters an unlikely alliance with the by-the-book detective, Taylor Kwon, to bring down a ruthless killer of their respective partners.” Letters were sent to the producers and directors. This is yet another example of a trashy negative portrayal of Italians unfortunately starring an Italian American.
- Silver Linings Playbook - David O. Russell’s *Silver Linings Playbook*, stars Robert DeNiro as Pat Solitano, a football crazed, down-on-his-luck bookie, whose son, Pat Jr., played by Bradley Cooper, has bi-polar disorder. The fact is that David O. Russell’s real-life son has bi-polar disease, but he isn’t Italian. Why make the characters Italian? As always, it’s the profit motive. Negative Italian portrayals sell. We emailed the cast of characters with our objections.
- Nicky Deuce – Nicelodeon TV, an educational television network for children, is producing this film based on a children’s book written by former cast member of the *Sopranos*, Steven Schirippa, and co-author Charles Flemming. Directed by Johathan A. Rosenbaum, the status of the film is still characterized as “pre-production.” The film stars James Gandolfini as ‘Bobby Eggs,’ Steven Schirippa as ‘Uncle Frankie,’ Michael Imperiale as ‘The Doctor,’ Tony Sirico as ‘Charlie Cement,’ and others in similar roles. As you can see, it is a cast right out of the *Sopranos*.

The storyline is that a 12 year old boy, Nicholas Borelli II, is going to spend two weeks at Camp Wannameka while his parents vacation on a cruise. Camp is cancelled because of damage from an explosion, and he must spend the two weeks with his paternal grandmother and uncle in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. Nicholas suspects that his uncle is involved in the Mafia. While his father has never spoken about Brooklyn after he left, Nicholas begins to change his feelings about his grandmother and Brooklyn.

As the storyline progresses, this young boy meets a cast of characters who are all negative stereotypes of Italian Americans and becomes introduced to petty crime, counterfeit money and bootlegging. Nickelodeon TV is masquerading as "education" one of the most inappropriate films for children introducing young people to the negative stereotypes of Italian Americans. Emails and letters have been sent to corporate heads of Viacom, MTV and Mar Vista Entertainment expressing our indignation about the film. We are asking for a meeting to discuss this defamatory and immoral film. NY CSJ and National CSJ have been actively involved in protesting this very inappropriate and denigrating film. Although an acknowledgement of our letters and emails has been received, a meeting still has not been arranged. This is supposed to be an educational network for children. We find nothing educational nor of redeeming value in this outrageous film.

Bias and Bigotry on Radio, Television, YouTube

- **Saturday Night Live** has been contacted about a Sopranos- like skit involving characters that depict us in very negative ways. Supposedly taking place in a high school, the characters are derived from the characters on the Sopranos series. We contacted Saturday Night Live with our concerns.
- **Snooki and JWOW** - The latest addition to the saga of Jersey Shore was a new reality spin-off series showing a pregnant Nicole 'Snooki' Polizzi and her friend, Jenni 'JWoww' Farley, Snooki and JWOW finding and setting up an apartment in Jersey City, New Jersey. Roger Mathews plays JWOWw's boyfriend and Jionni LaValle plays Snooki's boyfriend and is also the father of the child she had in September. The show premiered on June 21, 2012. Letters have been emailed.
- **Brooklyn 11223** – As mentioned before, this denigrating show on the Oxygen Network is another "Jersey Shore," and is set in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. It follows twelve Italian American men and women in their mid 20's. The men are portrayed as muscle-men and braggarts and the women are portrayed as loud, drunken and running wild in Bay Ridge. In spite of our objections, it is now renewed for its second season.
- **CBS – The Life of Retired Las Vegas Sheriff Ralph Lamb**
CBS is filming an as yet untitled series about the life of retired Las Vegas Sheriff Ralph Lamb. In the series, Lamb is regarded as a no nonsense sheriff for 18 years. The "project" is being written by Nicholas Pileggi, the author of the movie *Casino*. As anticipated, Pileggi's villain in the series has an Italian surname. During Lamb's time, Meyer Lansky was associated with the Italian mafia and in control of Vegas. He could have easily changed the villain's name but as we know the Italian presence adds the drama to the show. Thanks to CSJ Chairman of the Grand Lodge of California and Nevada, Tony Ricevuto, for the above information. We will send a letter/e-mail to CBS and followed through. Tony will follow up and send pertinent information as he receives it.
- **NBC Program – Law and Order SVU** - NBC announced that its season premiere of *Law and Order SVU* will feature Franco Nero as an Italian dignitary accused of rape, evoking the case of Dominique Straus-Kahn, the French head of the International Monetary Fund, who was accused of sexually assaulting a maid in a Midtown Manhattan hotel. A letter was sent to NBC Headquarters complaining about the network's choice to make an Italian the offender of such a vile act of violence that closely parallels the events of the Strauss-Kahn case, which received national attention. NBC did not respond and the program was aired.
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- **Fox Five News Commentators** - aired an episode in which commentators discussed Abercrombie and Fitch's offer to pay Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino from the Jersey Shore series not to wear their sport clothing line. During the discussion, Bob Beckel, one of the news panelists said, "Why would Abercrombie and Fitch want a bunch of grease balls wearing their clothes?" CSJ sent a scathing letter of complaint via e-mail to the Fox Network. Fox did not respond but we believe that the network and Mr. Beckel got the message.
- **Long Island Medium** – This show, now in its fourth season on TLC, stars Theresa Caputo of Hicksville, New York, who purports to communicate messages from deceased members of families. Those who believe in her ability to communicate with their deceased relatives are not bothered by her stereotypical Italian American characteristics.

- Ramburg – A & E’s new reality show about a group of Italian exterminators from Brooklyn who dress in camouflage. Of course, the exterminators are typical Italian American stereotypes.
- Italian Families – A casting call was recently distributed for a new TV series, yet unnamed, for traditional Italian families. The casting call states that the show is supposedly very positive with the goal of making relationships between family members better. However, the theme of the show is actually about a family having cultural issues, such as an in-law coming into the family from another culture, causing family issues, especially with grandparents. In other words, family fights, biased remarks, and such drivel. We wrote to Leftfield Productions, along with NYS CSJ, and hopefully eliminate this program before it begins.
- Mafia Wives – Now in its third season, Mafia Wives, on VH1, has been considered a “powerhouse” show. Our efforts over a period of two years, helped to keep this show off the air. This American reality series made its debut on April 17, 2011, and follows six Staten Island women after their husbands or fathers are arrested and imprisoned for crimes connected to the Mafia. Created by Jennifer Graziano, and Italian American woman, it furthers the negative stereotype of Italian American women. Our fear is that these negative stereotypical Italian American women will redefine the image of all Italian American women. E-mails have been sent by National and NYS CSJ to Tom Calderone, President of Viacom, Jennifer Graziano, Executive Producer, and Jeff Olde, Executive Vice President of Original Programming. We await their response.
- Boardwalk Empire – HBO’s sequel to the Sopranos, Boardwalk Empire, directed by Martin Scorsese, began in September 2010. This show, starring Steve Buscemi as a Jersey gangster/politician, was renewed for a fourth season on 10/2/12. This series chronicles the life and times of Nucky Thompson, the ruler of Atlantic City, who was a combination of gangster and politician. This series highlights the lives of stereotypical Jewish, Irish and Italian American gangsters living in New Jersey, and showcases their outrageous behavior, unsavory activities and despicable characters. Letters of complaint have been sent to executives of HBO. However, with 12 Emmy Awards and 30 nominations, this show is here to stay.
- National Public Radio (NPR) – December 2012 – A feature on the NPR program “All Things Considered” credited a “Juan Pablos” as the first printer in the New World after he published “A Short and Most Compendious Christine Doctrine” in 1539 in Mexico. But his real name was Giovanni Paoli, which was translated into Spanish when he went to live in Seville. Paoli was also the first to publish books in Native American languages. An OSIA member Peter Tafuri of Scranton, PA sent a correction to NPR, which printed it on its blog. Thanks to Dona DeSanctis, Editor of Italian America, for this article.

Bias and Bigotry In Literature/ Scholastic Books

- Scholastic Inc., 557 Broadway, NY, NY - As evidenced by a recent trip to our grandchildren’s elementary school for a “Fun Evening Event” which also included selling Scholastic Books. We were looking at books geared to elementary school children ranging from Kindergarten through Sixth Grade when I spotted a book by Gennifer Choldenko, a Newbery Honor-Winning author. The name of her book was Al Capone Shines My Shoes. Discrimination, bias and bigotry against Italian Americans have just reached a new low; they are now preying on our Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Graders, teaching them early about Italian stereotypes.

When I discussed this derogatory book with the Assistant Principal who was in attendance that evening, she admitted that she had never read the book! She mentioned that she was also a proud Italian American and that this series of books was **required reading for the Sixth Grade** and was also on a **summer reading list** for entering Sixth Graders. I discussed with her the poor judgment exhibited by the school system in choosing such a defamatory book and that now the “negative image of Italian Americans” was being taught to children at a young, very impressionable age. She promised to look into this situation.

However, when I showed the book to teachers in my school, I discovered that this was “only the tip of the iceberg.” Most districts in Nassau County used the Al Capone series as required reading. The book, *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, by the same author, was a Newbery Honor Book as well. I sent a letter to Scholastic Inc., at 557 Broadway, New York, New York. Hopefully I will have an update at our meeting. If not, NYS CSJ President, Rick Annichiarico and I will attend a yet to be scheduled meeting with Scholastic to let them know just how offensive this series is. In the meantime, please monitor the schools in your state or locale, especially the Sixth Grade, which can be part of the elementary school system or the beginning of Middle School, the most impressionable time in a young child’s life. Find out from your children and/or grandchildren, what is considered required reading for their grade.

As an update to this situation, when visiting my daughter and our grandchildren, I discovered that Arrow Books, a subdivision of Scholastic, Inc. was offering a two-set series of the Al Capone books to children in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grades for \$10.00. I was absolutely appalled that children were now being targeted to learn the history of Italian gangsters. I have the book with me in case you’d like to read it. There will be much more to follow on this issue.

- ***Here Comes The Garbage Barge*** is a children’s book based on a true story and intended to teach children about ecology. The author’s note gave a synopsis of the true story and included the following remarks, “*My fictionalized version of the true Garbage Barge story has taken some liberties with the facts. Various real-life characters have been eliminated and the business partnership has been turned into one invented character, Gino Stroffolino, for the sake of simplicity and, well humor!*” Of course, Gino was the garbage man, who came up with the brilliant plan to send Long Island garbage down to South Carolina. His friend, **Joey LaMotta**, made the arrangements for the barge’s ridiculous journey. As the story goes, the garbage barge traveled as far as Mexico, but no one wanted the garbage. Both Gino Stroffolino and Joey LaMotta spoke in broken English. National and NYS CSJ wrote to the publishers, Random House Children’s Books, the Director of the Queens Public Library and Massapequa Library (these libraries carry this book in their Children’s Section). The complaining parents failed to see the entertainment or humor in stereotyping the two key characters in the book.

We received a response from Anne Schwartz that included the author’s apology. The letter included the fact that the actual perpetrators of this garbage barge fiasco were members of the Lucchese Crime Family. The author stated that his wife was Italian and that he is presently completing a book on a famous Italian American, not names. He also provided the NYS CSJ with a book on Sandy Koufax. CSJ responded to Anne Schwartz but received no other correspondence from her. The Massapequa Library informed us that they would not remove the book from their shelves.

Bias and Bigotry in Restaurants

- **Katwalk** - a popular restaurant on East 35th Street in Manhattan has a Tuesday night special - Mobster night, with specially priced drinks such as Mobstinis, Godfather Champagne, Mafia Princess Wines, Soprano Shots, etc. They even suggest that patrons make the bartender an offer he can’t refuse. Giant screens surrounding the restaurant, are showing “classic” Mafia movies in the background all night. NYS CSJ wrote to the management asking that they adopt another Tuesday night theme that would not be offensive to any ethnic group.
- **Mulberry Street Bar** - On June 19, 2010, the NYS CSJ celebrated its 105th Anniversary with a ceremony on Grand Street, the site of our founding by Dr. Vincent Sellaro, and a lunch at Il Cortile Restaurant on Mulberry Street. While walking on Mulberry Street, many of our members were presented with “postcards” inviting patrons to ***Come and Get Whacked! On Thirsty Thursdays*** at the Mulberry Street Bar. A letter was sent to Ed Welsh, owner of the bar that we were outraged at the mobster focus and innuendos on their advertising. These postcards and all negative materials only perpetuate the misconception that all Italian Americans are members of the mob. This is neither amusing nor entertaining and Italian Americans are tired of constantly being portrayed as such. Unfortunately, these “events” seem to proliferate in New York City.

Bias and Bigotry in City Authorities

- Lt. Joseph Petrosino Park Offensive Exhibit - (from the website)

This small park is at a crossroads of several dynamic New York neighborhoods: Little Italy and the Bowery to the east, Chinatown to the south, and SoHo to the west and north. The site/area became parkland as a result of the City Charter of 1938, which turned over all public places and squares to the Department of Parks. Formerly known as Kenmare Square, Tammany Hall leader "Big Tim" Sullivan of the Lower East Side named Kenmare Street in honor of his mother's birthplace in Ireland. In 1987, the late Mayor Edward I. Koch signed a local law introduced by Council Member Miriam Friedlander, and passed by the City Council, to rename Kenmare Square in memory and honor of Police Lieutenant Joseph Petrosino (1860-1909).

The members of the Lt. Joseph Petrosino Lodge #285, the local Italian American community, and the NY CSJ, expressed their outrage that the park, through the New York City Parks Department, decided that it was an appropriate site for an exhibit of a nine foot tall prison cell called 'The Glass Sea' created by artist Jessica Feldman. The structure, according to Feldman, is an interpretation of the conditions of prison inmates, patients and others who are confined. NYS CSJ, under the leadership of Chairman, Rick Annichiarico, stated our outrage in a letter to NY City Parks Commissioner, Veronica White. He stated the following:

The Glass Sea exhibit is perceived as evoking sympathy for confined robbers, rapists, murderers and other violent felons who preyed on innocent victims and were convicted of their crimes and sent to prison. And of all places, Ms. Feldman's eye-catching, 9 foot high exhibit stands in a city park, dedicated to a humble and courageous police lieutenant who was killed trying to protect society from violent criminals who were attempting to establish an organized foothold in the City of New York and other large cities.

Background (from the website): Giuseppe (Joseph) Petrosino was born in Salerno, Italy, and immigrated to the United States with his family in 1873. As a boy, he shined shoes outside Police Headquarters on Mulberry Street. At the age of eighteen, he began his career in the public service with the Department of Sanitation (then under the jurisdiction of the Police Department). Fluent in many Italian dialects, Petrosino aided the police by working undercover as an informer in Little Italy. When he joined the Police Department in 1883, Petrosino was the city's shortest officer, at five feet and three inches tall. Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt personally promoted him to Sergeant of Detectives in 1895. While investigating anarchists in the United States, Petrosino warned President McKinley of threats against his life; however, the warning was not heeded and the President was assassinated in 1901.

Within ten years, Petrosino was named lieutenant and given command of the new Italian Squad, a unit created to combat the crime organization known as the Black Hand. Under his leadership, several thousand arrests were made, and more than 500 offenders were sent to prison. Crimes against Italian-Americans dropped by fifty percent. Petrosino was killed while on assignment to Palermo, Sicily. When his body was returned to New York, thousands of mourners formed a funeral procession which marched from Little Italy to Calvary Cemetery in Queens. Lt. Petrosino was the only New York police officer who had died in the line of duty outside the United States. The park named in his honor is located just north of the Renaissance Revival edifice at 240 Centre Street, which served as Police Headquarters from 1910 to 1971.

- Battery Park City Authority - Several months ago, John Fratta, NYS CSJ Executive Board member, and a NY City activist for Italian American issues, served a Freedom of Information Request on the Battery Park City Authority asking for information as to how they arrived at the decision to rent a space on Pier A, at the edge of Battery Park, to Peter Poulakakos, to open a restaurant, without first going through the local Community Board and the community at large.

Other bidders for Pier A included Joseph Grano, Jr., who proposed installing a museum of Italian American Heritage, however, he received no response from authority officials. The NYS CSJ followed up with a letter to the Chief Administration Officer of the Battery Park City Authority and Governor Andrew Cuomo asking that the property be donated for the purpose of establishing an Italian American Museum. There is already in place at Battery Park, the Jewish Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Irish Famine Memorial, both properties having been donated by the Battery Park City Authority. **The National CSJ has e-mailed a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo with regard to the above and encourages everyone to add their voices to the website. We need 1000 signatures. Here is the website: <http://www.change.org/petitions/sign-a-petition-to-governor-cuomo-for-an-italian-american-museum-at-pier-a>.**

Bias and Bigotry in Video Games and Books

Mafia II – We reported our efforts to eradicate Mafia videogames. Here is another sample. Mafia II encourages players to “jump into the late ‘40’s, early ‘50’s mob underworld” promising gunplay, intense violence, nudity, sexual content, strong language, together with the use of drugs and alcohol. The game is supposed to be directed to a mature player, however, young, impressionable teens have access to this videogame. National and NYS CSJ wrote to Strauss Zelnick, Chairman of Take-Two Interactives, the company that produces this videogame and received a very disappointing response from a Vice President of Corporate Communications & Public Affairs, who described this game as “art, entertainment and a socially responsible product.” He cited in his letter that *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos* “*were widely accepted works of art within our culture that received the highest creative awards.*” Interestingly, they also produced “Grand Theft Auto” which has been linked to the deaths of several people including two police officers, their dispatcher, and several other people by teens acting out scenes from the videogame.

The game was to be “launched” from the 92nd St. Y in Tribeca on August 28, 2010 at 8PM. The CSJ, in conjunction with other Italian American organizations, contacted Sol Adler, by e-mail asking that the “Y” rescind permission for this game to be launched at their facility. I wrote to our friend, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Jewish spiritual leader with a radio program on 1010 Wins, who concurred with all of us that a Jewish facility not be used to launch this videogame. William Pierez, President of B’nai B’rith International, and Margarete Goldberger, of B’nai B’rith and the Holocaust Museum, also concurred and joined our efforts. Sol Adler was on vacation, conveniently, and his office notified us that they had leased the facility for the launching of this game and the lease agreement could not be broken. We were advised that in accordance with Article 15, Section 295, paragraph 11, of the Commission for Human Rights, “*To inquire into incidents of and conditions which may lead to tension and conflict among racial, religious, and nationality groups and to take such action within the authority granted by law, to the division, as may be designated to alleviate such conditions, tension and conflict,*” we could not seek the intervention of this Commission. We made several conference calls and sent an email to the proper person at the Commission, but we received no response. The CSJ did follow up with a letter to the Commissioner of Human Rights, asking why our complaint was not even acknowledged. We did receive a reply from Commissioner Kirkland, who apologized and related that we had contacted them at a vacation time, when few people were available. He further stated that the matter did not come within their purview. A press conference and rally was held outside the 92nd St. Y Tribeca on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2010 to protest the launching of Mafia II and the CSJ was represented at this event by NYS CSJ President, Stella Grillo and John Fratta, as pictured in *Justice*, the newspaper of the NYS CSJ.

- **Apple Media** – Apple Media’s “What Country” Application’s Description of Italy as “Mafia, Pizza, Pasta and Scooter” – We joined with Italy’s Tourism Minister, Michela Vittoria Brambilla, in condemning this app and expressing our outrage at the way in which the tourist guide describes the nation of Italy. Ms. Brambilla also stated that “Italy is a beacon in the world for its history, culture and style. I cannot allow our country to be discredited by having it represented by a criminal organization.” We wholeheartedly agreed! This application can be downloaded to iPhones, iPads, and iPods and characterizes each nation with words and images. Unfortunately,

with all of the contributions Italians and Italian Americans have made to humanity, Italy is summed up with a road sign reading “Mafia parking only” and other negative characterizations of Italians in general.

We wrote to the late Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Media, 1 Infinite Loop, Cupertino, California and stated that his description of this app as “a light-hearted and funny view of the world...” was anything but funny. A ministry spokesman, Andrea Bianchi, stated that Italy is asking Apple to “withdraw the application from sale on its online site and requested that the state attorney’s office take legal action against those responsible for it.”

Bias and Bigotry in Museums

Report on Museums from Tony Ricevuto, CSJ Chairman of the Grand Lodge of California and Nevada – July 22, 2012

Received an updated report from Tony Ricevuto. He had back surgery in June and was still in the recovery process. The Organized Crime and Law Enforcement (Mob Museum) continues to attract visitors and locals. The museum is located in (old town Vegas) and is the flagship of a rejuvenation in that area. So far he continues to hear more positive remarks than negative. This is due to the quality of the exhibits and the factual story it portrays.

The Mob Exhibition located in the Tropicana resorts is again active but does not have the attendance that it anticipated. An investor purchased the rights during a bankruptcy proceeding. The Exhibition is open to the public and uses Hollywood themes more than factual events. There are still several civil proceedings against the initial owner and his companies.

He wrote about CBS filming a show about the life of retired Las Vegas Sheriff Ralph Lamb. In the series, Lamb is regarded as a no nonsense sheriff for 18 years. The “project” is being written by Nicholas Pileggi, the author of the movie Casino. As anticipated, Pileggi's villain in the series has an Italian surname. During Lamb's time, Lanksy was associated with the Italian mafia and in control of Vegas. He could have easily changed the villain's name but as we know the Italian presence adds the drama to the show.

Report on Museums from Tony Ricevuto, CSJ Chairman of the Grand Lodge of California and Nevada – February 15, 2012

The *National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement*, commonly referred to as the “The Mob Museum” is officially open. Since my last report, I have met with Jonathan Ullman, Chief Administrative Officer of the museum. Mr. Ullman has assured me that the museum is designed to tell the story and history of Organized Crime and how it effected the growth of Las Vegas. Mr. Ullman stated that the views and that of the museum’s Board of Directors are to tell a story that is fair and balanced based on historical facts that include Italians, Jewish and Irish nationalities that have been associated with the criminal element. The aim is to show how they managed to turn Vegas into one of the most lucrative and illegal money laundering operations in US history.

They have assembled several retired FBI and Las Vegas METRO officers to include statements and documents from some Italian American Law Enforcement Officers who investigated the Organized Crime element. Mr. Ullman stated that the show will emphasize Law Enforcement men and women who worked to disrupt and convict these criminals.

According to Mr. Ullman, the theme is “to tell the two sides to every story and then there’s the truth.” “The museum represents an authentic exploration of the notorious battle between organized crime and law enforcement.” The exhibits will also go into the 20th century and will recognize the various cultures that make up today’s criminal element; they will also present modern day efforts to curb the existing criminal problems.

Mr. Ullman advised that they have followed the best practices for accreditation and this is an educational tool not designed to glamorize but to educate the public.

The museum is housed in the Old Downtown Las Vegas Post Office and is recognized as a historical site. The three story building once hosted one of the Kefauver Committee's hearings on Organized Crime. Many of the Kefauver Committee's hearings were conducted throughout the United States. They were aimed at proving that an Italian-Sicilian organization based on strong family ties centrally controlled a vast organized crime conspiracy in the United States, but the committee never came close to justifying such a claim.

The City of Las Vegas was awarded a 45 million dollar grant which included revitalization of the downtown area. They spent approximately 35 million to renovate the courthouse and design the attraction. Oscar Goodman, the ex Mayor of Las Vegas and noted "mob attorney" was the force in initiating the project. Mr. Goodman donated his memoirs to the museum. He hired Dennis Barrie, PhD who completed the Spy museum in Washington DC and many other notable museums. Mr. Barrie and his wife are museum curators and were instrumental in creating the museum's interactive displays and conducting historical backgrounds. Barrie stated, "The museum puts considerable focus on how law enforcement has battled organized crime and features many of the names, techniques and behind-the-scenes stories that bring the story full circle. The stories are so compelling, they need no embellishment. It is pure unadulterated history that will easily enlighten and educate visitors of all ages on a topic that continues to fascinate the generations." Mr. Barrie estimates that 200,000 to 300,000 yearly visitors are expected to tour the facility.

I was invited to the grand opening of the museum on February 15, 2012 and toured the entire exhibit. I found it to be balanced and focused on historical facts and not the Hollywood interpretation to glorify criminals. It's a story of Organized Crime that includes all cultures that contributed and conducted illegal activities that were instrumental in making Las Vegas a notorious city. The exhibit traces Organize Crime from the early 1900's into the impact of prohibition, gambling and loan sharking. The tour starts with the Kefauver hearings court room and displays videos of the actual hearings. The tour continues with the money laundering and skimming activities of Meyer Lansky and others. It shows how Italians, Jewish, Irish and other criminals attempted to extort and use force for their personal gain. The violence, murder, infighting and greed contributed to the demise of their control on Vegas. One of the exhibits has some of the actual bricks from the St. Valentine massacre from Chicago, IL. Federal and Las Vegas METRO law enforcement became involved in conducting investigations that resulted in numerous arrests and incarceration of these criminals. Retired FBI and Metro agents consulted and contributed artifacts and their personal knowledge that are part of the museum. **The only negative comment is that they only recognized a few of the Italian American Law Enforcement members who were influential and aggressive in investigating Organized Crime. I will be addressing this issue with their Board. There is already some controversy concerning the name of the museum especially since people are more fascinated with La Cosa Nostra and mob figures than with Law Enforcement.** It's to be seen if the museum will contribute to the revitalization of the downtown area. Already several business establishments in the area have used the name MOB to promote their activities.

We must remember that movies and media fuel the "myths of the Mob" It's that aura that is a potential draw for actors and audiences who see gangsters as lovable rogues and not harden criminals. Lefty Rosenthal used to say the American dream is great wealth – with no work. According to Nicholas Pileggi who wrote the movies *Goodfellas* and *Casino*, "that's the dream of the gangster movie." Mr. Pileggi's works and other Hollywood movies are featured at the end of the museum tour to show how the media took advantage and glorified these criminals for profit.

I am in contact with the members of the Italian Community in Las Vegas to include the President of the Italian American Club, the Augustus Society and the Directors of the Italian News paper *La Voce*. We will have the opportunity for a private tour where we will include our opinions of the museum.

Note: The Mob Experience (Private Museum) opened in February 2011 at the Tropicana. The City's venture will open in December 2011. The mayor believes that over 600,000 visitors will visit the museum each year.

- **Mob Museums – Las Vegas, Nevada – Report from 2011**

Tony Ricevuto, the President of the Las Vegas Lodge #2158 and a retired 22 year DEA law enforcement officer and professor of criminal justice, has been named CSJ Chairman of the Grand Lodge of California and Nevada. He has been working hard with regard to the Mob Museums in Las Vegas, Nevada. There are two museums being organized in Las Vegas, Nevada. One being sponsored by the City of Las Vegas, will be housed in the building former Senator Estes Keefauver used to conduct his investigation of organized crime, and will include the story of the founding of Las Vegas by members of the mob. Interestingly, the city purchased the building for \$1 and received local, state and federal grants to renovate it and establish the museum. Tony and his committee are working to have a section in this museum devoted to Italian-American Crimefighters. The second one being sponsored by private individuals, will include a section devoted to Italian-American Crimefighters, will be interactive, will be located in the Tropicana and will feature artifacts which were donated by the estates or families of Mickey Cohen, Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegal and Sam Giancana. Both Tony and the late Russ Rametta, wrote to the Mayor of Las Vegas explaining our objections to the museum being sponsored by the city. The Mayor responded to his letter and seemingly understands our position. Their concerns focused on whether the exhibition would perpetuate the stereotype of Italian Americans as law-breakers and leave out the role of Italian Americans in fighting organized crime. They met with Jeff Bloom, who is the managing partner of the proposed exhibition, to voice their point of view. Bloom stated that the museum was not meant to vilify them but was going to tell the complete story. The entire project will be funded with private funds. Russ and Tony proposed that part of the museum be dedicated to showing the role played by Italian Americans in fighting organized crime. They presented Mr. Bloom with a pamphlet published by the National CSJ about our crime-fighters. Grand Lodge of California President, Maria Pignati, has become very involved joining Grand Lodge of California's IPP, National Treasurer Frank Panessa, National Trustee Joe LaBanca and Past President and Past National Trustee, Dave Prisco, along with Tony Ricevuto. Both Russ and Tony met with Mr. Bloom and his partners to view the exhibit and to emphasize our support for a law-enforcement section dealing with Italian Americans who fought organized crime. They both believed that they are taking a pro-active stance and asked for a fair and balanced portrayal regarding the museum.

Report of the Social Justice Committee

Worthy State President, State Officers, State Delegates and Members of the Order

During the past year, the majority of time has been monitoring the two "Mob Museums" located in Las Vegas, NV. The *Mob Exhibition* (privately funded) is located inside the Tropicana Resort. Due to allegations of fraud and failure to pay their contractors, they declared bankruptcy. Recently a Federal Court Judge approved the bankruptcy but civil cases between the main owners and organizers are pending. Due to these allegations of fraud, criminal charges may be filed in the future. The Tropicana management agreed to the court's settlement that will allow the business not to pay rent for one year then become in a position to re-negotiate their lease. The initial investors lost their investments.

Throughout all this, the attraction remains open. The majorities of the initial attractions have been replaced or are not working. The "mob families" who contributed artifices are also involved in legal maneuvers to obtain their properties. The remaining officers are in the process of changing the venue's name to the *Mob Attraction*. They have secured another investor approved by the Court. Although the exhibition continues to operate the attendance has diminished and it's not as profitable as their initial expectations.

Bias and Bigotry in Tours

- **Vegas Mob Tour**

In conjunction with the Mob Museum sponsored by the City of Las Vegas, there is a new mob tour. Among the many defamatory comments on the website, there is a reference that to be a “made man” in the mob, you had to be 100% Sicilian and have murdered someone. Although other gangsters are featured, five are Italian. But the whole website has the feel of the “wiseguy” Sopranos-like show. On the tour, there are select sites where people were murdered and vivid descriptions of their deaths. Interestingly, those who are organizing this tour, are not Italian. They even live in Michigan and thought that this would be a good idea and were surprised that no one had thought of it before. Their premise is that this is a good money-making venture.

- **Mob Bus Tours – New York City.** Bus tours of “gangland history” are being offered that conclude with dinner at Bocca Al Lupo, a restaurant on Mulberry Street owned by John Ciarcia. We asked if the tour included Lt. Joseph Petrosino’s home and why they would conduct such a tour, when there were so many other sights in New York to commemorate Italian Americans. The woman offering the tours claimed to be a proud Italian American and continued to say that **there was nothing wrong with their tours.** Letters were written to John Ciarcia concerning these tours that offered bus rides in *blood-soaked* Manhattan “with the hope of bringing some of the city’s old gangland history back to life.”

VI. Saving the Advanced Placement (AP) Italian Language Program Update

- **Historical Information**

Due to the efforts of the National OSIA and the National CSJ, in joining with a coalition of organizations working to preserve the Advanced Placement (AP) Program in Italian, we achieved our goal of raising sufficient funds to preserve the AP Exam in Italian. OSIA’s extensive nationwide campaign to save the AP Exam in Italian was the key in helping to preserve the AP Exam. *“OSIA considered preserving and expanding Italian Studies an integral part of its raison d’etre,” says OSIA National President Joseph DiTrapani.* This campaign was spearheaded by National OSIA President, Joseph DiTrapani. Letters were sent to our NYS lodges and members as well as other OSIA Grand Lodges and various Italian American organizations, with successful results. Sufficient funds were raised and the AP Exam is again in place for our students. We commend National President, Joseph DiTrapani, who persevered until his mission was complete.

- **Background**

Despite its growing popularity in U.S. schools, the AP Program in Italian that OSIA helped establish in 2005 was in danger of elimination for lack of funds, according to the College Board. Approximately \$3 million was required to save the program.

The Advanced Placement (AP) is an extensive program that offers high school students the chance to complete college-level courses in 22 subjects, including foreign languages. AP courses help prepare students for college level work whereby they gain college credits, which allows them to take more advanced courses when they get to college. Students who have successfully completed AP courses receive special consideration by college admissions boards that increases their chances of college acceptance and scholarship awards. A recent survey revealed that more than half of the students surveyed would study Italian in college over any other foreign language.

Italy’s Ambassador to the U.S. Giulio Terzi Di Sant’Agata was instrumental in obtaining a commitment from the Italian Government for \$1.5 Million over a three-year period to underwrite the AP program, provided that this country’s national Italian American Community raised matching funds.

In December 2009, OSIA officers unanimously voted to support funding for the AP Program and pledged a minimum of \$75,000 over three years. Other Italian American Organizations including NIAF, UNICO, Columbus Citizens Foundation and the American Society of the Italian Legions of Merit also pledged funding and more organizations joined this coalition with varying amounts of support.

NYS Regents Exam in Italian

In the summer of 2010, the NYS Board of Regents proposed the elimination of all foreign language Regents Examinations, except for French and Spanish. A letter-writing campaign was conducted among CSJ membership asking that they e-mail the Board of Regents members and their state legislators, protesting this decision because the elimination of the Regents Exam in Italian would severely damage the growth and development of Italian Language Education in New York State. We believe that the combined efforts of the National and NYS CSJ made a difference. The Regents Exam was restored for all language studies until June 2011. National and NYS CSJ will continue to promote a letter-writing campaign to the Board of Regents to maintain Regents exams in all languages, as long as New York State continues to require high school students to pass these exams in order to receive a Regents Diploma.

- Current Problem

We are again faced with the same situation and membership again is being asked to contact Board of Regents members and their state legislators, to extend the Regents Exam in Italian by Individual letters, e-mails and telephone calls send a clear message. Now that AP Italian has been restored, it is critical that the Regents Exam in Italian be maintained as well.

- Statistics

The New York Board of Regents is again planning to eliminate all Regents Exams (including Italian) with the exception of French and Spanish. From June 2005 to June 2009, the number of students taking the Italian Regents Exam rose significantly. Neither French, German, or Hebrew have exhibited that kind of significant growth.

The statistics compare June 2006 & June 2009:

June 2009 - Italian - 8,250 (increased from 7,949 in 2006 and 6,944 in 2005)
June 2009 - Latin - 2,223 (2,161 in 2006)
June 2009 - German - 2,076 (2,148 in 2006)
June 2009 - Hebrew - 149 (124 in 2006)
June 2009 - French - 17, 076 (18,503 in 2006)
June 2009 - Spanish - 86,780 (83,495 in 2006)

It is also important to note that a substantial number of students taking the AP Spanish exam are native speakers of Spanish. The opposite is true of students taking the Italian Regents Exam. Most students studying Italian are NOT Italian-Americans.

State University of New York

Update

Through a series of communications, beginning with our letter to S.U.N.Y. Albany administration, it has now been brought to our attention that the Italian Language program will be phased out for graduate students and possibly incoming new students. Also included in the phasing out are the Classics, French, Russian and Theatre. They are working to preserve the Italian Language Program for incoming students. We will continue to monitor the situation.

The Problem

The State University of New York at Albany (S.U.N.Y. – Albany) has proposed as part of its budget cutting mechanism, the suspension of all NEW undergraduate and graduate studies in five program areas: Classics, French, Italian, Russian and Theatre. In response to the letters sent by the National and NYS CSJ's, the university provided the following information:

SUNY – Albany has **serious budget reductions** in all operations areas; the state budget reduced the level of state assistance by approximately \$12 million; in the past three years, SUNY – Albany as lost \$33.5 million in state tax support reductions – more than a 30% decline. This means that undergraduate students cannot declare a major in any of the above stated areas at this time. Students also cannot declare a minor in any of these program areas either. On the graduate level, no new applications for admission to any of the aforementioned programs will be accepted. Even

though they stated that no programs have been closed, new admissions have been suspended in degree programs in Russian, French and Italian and they have developed a plan to phase out those degree programs. It is important to note that these are only three of the 13 languages taught at SUNY – Albany. The others, which are not being eliminated are: Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Hebrew, German, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Portuguese and Spanish. They went on to say that even if the full degree programs in the areas of Russian, French and Italian are phased out, they “hope” to be able to continue to offer language instruction in these areas.

The Impact

The State University of New York has 64 geographically dispersed campuses bringing educational opportunity within commuting distance of virtually all New Yorkers and comprises the nation's largest comprehensive system of public higher education. If one campus of the SUNY system decides to eliminate the study of Italian claiming budget constraints, the other 63 campuses won't be far behind. It will also motivate other colleges and universities, not only in New York, but around the country, to eliminate Italian, despite the statistics which indicate that the study of the Italian language is not only on the increase throughout the United States, it is vitally important. (Please see letter to SUNY – Albany) In addition to our correspondence with the university, we have exchanged e-mails and encouraged membership to send letters to SUNY administrators.

VII. Holocaust Memorial Program

- Update: Elizabeth Bettina, author of the book entitled *It Happened In Italy*, which contains untold stories of how the people of Italy defied the horrors of the Holocaust to save their Jewish population is in the process of making a Documentary Film based on the book. Because of her book, she's heard from approximately 50 people throughout the United States who stated that they were also saved in Italy or that their family members were. They all state, “It was because of the Italian people that (I) (we) (they) survived. Both Ms. Bettina and Vincent Marmorale, Chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Committee of the NYS CSJ, have asked for our support of this video-documentary. Mr. Marmorale requested that the promo be shown at the NELA Dinner so that the young people and others in attendance, could be made aware of the amazing courage and bravery of the Italian people. Although their request was turned down, we presented a three minute excerpt from the documentary at our National Convention.

Recommendation

After reviewing the promo video-documentary, we should consider helping to sponsor this project since Vincent Marmorale is the Chairperson of the NYS CSJ's Holocaust Memorial Committee, a very reputable and passionate historian, and this story is so important to counteract the negative stereotyping of Italian Americans. Most Americans, and Italian Americans, don't know this story about the “Saving of Jews in Italy.” Over 45,000 Jews were saved because of the courage and bravery of the Italian people in Italy and lands occupied by Italians. NIAF invited Elizabeth Bettina to speak at a dinner function with over 500 people in attendance. UNICO has requested that she also present her video documentary and speak at their general assembly meeting. We should get involved in this very worthy project.

Other Programs and Projects To Consider

- Re-establishment of the National CSJ Women's Committee – focusing on the negative image of Italian American women especially in view of the reality series “Jersey Shore.”
- National CSJ Pamphlet – Compile a pamphlet listing our goals, programs, projects, and defamation issues.
- National CSJ Banner – to be used at fundraisers and for parades.
- Interactive Website – We now have a CSJ Facebook page, providing public relations for National OSIA and the CSJ. Go onto Facebook, type in “OSIA National Commission for Social

Justice” written out, and you will have access to up-to-the-minute updates for the National CSJ. Thanks to Grace Olivo for setting this up for us.

VIII. Fundraising Projects

- Support the CSJ Program – At our February 2010 Plenary Session, National OSIA President, Joseph DiTrapani proposed that each state consider requesting a \$1.00 donation per member to help support the CSJ. Grand Lodge of Ohio State President, Larry Siebieda, through his CSJ Chairperson, Frank A. Fregiato, Esq., began an immediate campaign to support the CSJ. Donations totaling \$903.00 were received by National CSJ President, Santina Haemmerle from the five Ohio lodges. Letters of thanks were sent to Mr. Fregiato as well as the individual lodges. We know that other donations will be forthcoming at our National Convention.
- CSJ Decal Program – Decals were distributed by our National CSJ Treasurer, Joyce Ruisi Chmel. This project was approved at our August 2010 Plenary Session. The decals were ordered and distributed to all Grand Lodges and subordinate lodges in early 2012. Unfortunately, the funds were not available to order the decals we originally hoped to use. So far the response has been very disappointing.

Italian group assails ad

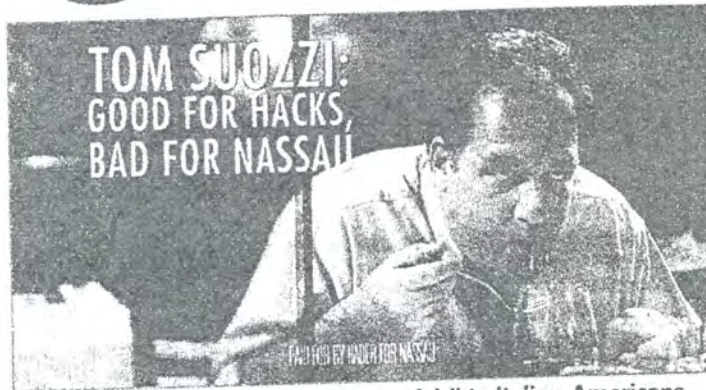
BY LAURA FIGUEROA
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Democratic Nassau County executive candidate Adam Haber came under fire yesterday from a national Italian-American group for a television ad it called "unfair" and "unjust" for its portrayal of "political hacks" eating spaghetti and drinking red wine as they discuss his opponent Thomas Suozzi's record.

Haber, a retired businessman from East Hills, is facing Suozzi, who served as Nassau County executive from 2002 through 2009, in a Democratic primary in September.

In a letter to Newsday yesterday, the Order Sons of Italy in America, a Washington, D.C., group that has an office in Bellmore, said it had received "many calls" complaining about the ad. The group called on Haber to take the ads down.

"Suozzi . . . has done nothing in his political career to warrant



Haber's TV spot was criticized as "unfair" to Italian-Americans.

the unfair, unjust and defamatory television ad that insults not only Suozzi, but millions of Italian-Americans," wrote Santina A. Haemmerle, a Massapequa resident who serves as national president of the group's anti-defamation branch.

Haber's campaign aides said the complaints were meant to deflect from the ad's claims that Suozzi misused county money. Haber's spokesman Galen Alexander said the campaign would not take down the

ads, but "Adam would never stereotype any ethnicity."

"Most Americans eat pasta, but only one Democratic county executive failed in his chance to make Nassau work for middle-class families," Alexander said. "Facts are facts, and Suozzi doled out millions in raises to himself and his appointees while raising taxes on middle-class families. . . . Nassau deserves better."

While Suozzi declined to comment, Nassau Democratic Party

chairman Jay Jacobs called on Haber to take down the ad.

"What they've tried to do is take an ethnic generalization to broad brush over facts that are just not true to disparage Suozzi's record," Jacobs said.

In the ad, five men seated at a restaurant table discuss how to get Suozzi back into office. They toast Suozzi for giving \$1.1 million in pay raises to political appointees in 2007; for a \$65,000 salary raise he gave himself that year and for hiring retired detectives as taxpayer-funded drivers. In 2007, Suozzi administration officials defended the pay increases to appointees as necessary to retain top talent. Suozzi in 2007 lobbied for the increase to his salary, arguing he was paid less than Suffolk's county executive. Suozzi said the retired police drivers allowed him to work while traveling.

Businessman Muzzio Tallini, a Haber supporter from Franklin Square, called the flap a "distraction," adding, "I'm a first-generation Italian-American and I didn't have an issue with it."

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