

**CSJ Article**  
November 2017

My Brothers and Sisters:

I would like to give you an update on our activities since my last article.

Columbus Day

In late September the Mayor of the City of New York Bill DeBlasio has responded to the issue raised by City Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito regarding the Columbus Statues and other statues that she considered to be hateful. Rather than the Mayor showing leadership on this issue he decided to create a panel of 15 individuals to examine each statue and present a determination with regard to their future.

The New York State Commission for Social Justice has joined forces with over 50 other Italian Organizations in New York to fight the attempt to remove Columbus statues from New York City. We, along with the Columbus Citizens Foundation, the Italian American Museum and the Italian Legal Defense and Higher Education fund are the four major groups leading the fight. A letter was sent out to all elected officials and candidates for office in New York City asking their position on the Columbus statues. Over 50 elected officials and candidates responded that they support our community. All the candidates for New York City's top office, with the exception of the Mayor, have announced their support. On the state level Governor Cuomo, State Comptroller DiNapoli and Senator Schumer have also announced their support for Columbus Day and the statues. Our CSJ Executive Board began making calls to all their local elected officials throughout New York State asking for their support for Columbus Day and we will be composing a list of those supporters in the future.

On October 4, 2017 a press conference was held at the Columbus Club to publically state our opposition to the removal of the statues. Our Executive Board paid for Risa Hoag to do the public relations for this event and notify the press. We had every news outlet in attendance including media and print. This story was carried on all the major news networks. State President Robert Ferrito attended this press conference along with the leaders of the other major Italian American Organizations.

We are now hearing from the mayor that no statue is being removed but they are looking into placing plaques or kiosks to tell the other side of the story. We made it extremely clear that we opposed any plaques or kiosks at these statues.

On November 6, 2017, the day before Election Day, we will be holding another press conference. At this event we will inform the voters which elected officials are supporting the Columbus Statues and those that are not. It is important to keep in mind that we are not endorsing any candidates for office. We are just giving the voters information on where they stand on this issue.

I am also happy to report that as of today we have collected over 14,000 signatures on our petition to Save Columbus Day. These will be sent to our National office by the end of the month. This figure will be in addition to the 17,000 plus signatures collected nationwide already in possession at the national office. I want to thank all those who collected these signatures. If there are any more out there please send them to me ASAP.

Due to the large amount of funds already allocated and more will be needed in the future to fight attempts on Columbus Day the Commission for Social Justice will be raising money and placing it in a separate account. One way will be the sale of "Save Columbus Day" tee-shirts and magnets. They will be sold through Central Buying. The tee-shirts will be sold for \$10.00 plus shipping and handling and the magnets will be \$3.00 each and two for \$5.00 plus shipping and handling. If anyone is interested in purchasing these items please contact Anita Rosato. **Again, I want to stress that all monies collected from these sales will be used to fight any attempts on Columbus Day.**

### Columbus Day Parade

I want to thank everyone who came out in the two Columbus Day parades and braved the rain. In the New York City parade we had the largest contingent of any other group marching. The rain did not dampen our spirits and our love for our heritage and culture.

Along the parade routes of both parades our members gave out Save Columbus Day tee-shirts and magnets to the spectators. Both of these were purchased by our Commission for Social Justice. There was such a great demand for both items.

### Saturday Night Live

We are still fighting Saturday Night Live for that episode that attacked Italian Americans in the worst way. I did send a letter to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum asking how they could allow their museum to be used to promote hatred and bigotry. As of this date we had no response to that letter. We will stay on top of this issue.

### Positive Image

The Commission for Social Justice is working on a new positive image approach. We are planning to have a grant program for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and high school students. We will issue two \$200.00 grants in each district, one for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and the second for a high school student. The students will be asked to write an essay about their Italian heritage and culture and why it is so important to keep that culture alive. Charlie Lucie is chairing this grand program. If the final draft is approved at our next CSJ meeting and by our State President Robert Ferrito we will send out the packages by the end of the year with the possibility of awarding the grants in April.

The other initiative is a legislative breakfast that we will host. The purpose of this is to have our elected officials hear from us and understand the issues that we deal with and the work done by the CSJ. We will also like to develop a closer relationship with all the

elected officials and hear from them how they can be of assistance to OSIA and CSJ. Keith Wilson is working with Co-Chair Eleanor Jobbagy in planning this event.

CSJ is in the process of creating a 2019 calendar that will list important Italian/Italian American details that occurred on each date. We will have this calendar created before next year's convention. They will be for sale at the convention and during the year. Eleanor Jobbagy is chairing this program.

On October 18, 2017 I attended Our Lady of Help Christians School in Staten Island. At this event Carl Ciaccio and Marcy Dabbene from the Father Vincent Cappadonna Lodge and Tony Corsello, the District Three Chair for the CSJ presented checks to the school for their Italian Language Program. The Cappadonna Lodge presented a \$500.00 grant and the District Three CSJ presented a \$1,000.00 check. The continuation of the Italian language is a very important and a major priority for the Commission for Social Justice as well as our order. The funds received will be used for the purchase of supplies to ease the burden on the schools funds. I want to congratulate the Father Vincent Cappadonna Lodge for their strong support for the Italian language.

Finally, we have a large supply of positive image items. They do us no good sitting in a storage unit. Please request these items to distribute at events at your lodges.

Fraternally yours,

*John*