

A RESOLUTION

Recognizing the month of October 2021 as "Italian-American Heritage Month" in Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, Explorer Christopher Columbus, the son of a wool merchant, was born in Genoa, Italy, around 1451; and

WHEREAS, Christopher Columbus was determined to find a quicker route west from Europe to Asia and embarked on what would become four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean starting in 1492; and

WHEREAS, During his initial voyage, Christopher Columbus landed upon an island in the Bahamas and his journey was a catalyst for centuries of exploration of the Americas; and

WHEREAS, Columbus set into motion the widespread transfer of people, plants, animals and cultures between the Old and New Worlds; and

WHEREAS, While Italian adventurers have always been a part of American history, it was not until the 1820s that Italian immigrants began moving to the United States in sizable numbers; and

WHEREAS, A feudal society, high unemployment and oppressive taxes, coupled with natural disasters, disease, poverty and famine gave many reasons for Italians to look for freedom and opportunities abroad; and

WHEREAS, While educated Italian professionals also emigrated, many Italian immigrants arrived relatively unskilled but soon helped fuel a booming industrial economy by providing labor for American factories and mines and helping to build roads, dams, tunnels and other infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, As Italian-Americans began settling in the country's

major cities, they faced religious and ethnic discrimination which occasionally led to brutal violence; and

WHEREAS, For this reason, Italian Americans started celebrating the life and accomplishments of Christopher Columbus as a way for citizens of Italian descent to be accepted by their new homeland; and

WHEREAS, In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Columbus Day as a national holiday; and

WHEREAS, We credit Christopher Columbus with Italian immigration to the New World and what is now Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are more than 16 million Americans of Italian heritage in the United States, and more than 1.4 million Americans of Italian heritage residing in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, In 1905, the Order Sons of Italy in America was formed with the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania to follow in 1913; and

WHEREAS, More recently, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania became an independent organization and was renamed the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania Sons and Daughters of Italy, existing to promote education, encourage the dissemination of Italian culture, organize programs for patriotic and humanitarian purposes and combat discrimination while protecting and upholding the positive image of Italian heritage; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize the month of October 2021 as "Italian-American Heritage Month" in Pennsylvania and acknowledge the important role of the early immigrants in our Commonwealth's history.