

# Italian American Groups Decry Axing of Columbus Day from School Calendar in Paterson, NJ

*Paterson, NJ Board of Education removes Columbus Day holiday from school calendar igniting a united backlash from New Jersey based Italian American groups*

BLOOMFIELD, NJ, USA, August 10, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Italian American One Voice Coalition ("[IAOVC](#)"), America's largest independent Italian American anti-bias organization, joined with a number of other New Jersey based Italian American organizations to denounce the elimination of Columbus Day from the Paterson, NJ school calendar.



Paterson NJ School Board Ignites Backlash from Italian Americans by Eliminating Columbus Day

At a recent meeting, the Paterson Board of Education eliminated Columbus Day from the school calendar and replaced it with "Indigenous People's Day/Italian Heritage Day" by a resolution stating, in part "to celebrate the legacy of America's indigenous people and the historical contributions made by Americans of Italian heritage."

Once the news broke, Italian American groups joined in opposition. "What a disgrace - we now have to see this happening in the third largest city in our State. It is just wrong," stated Dr. Manny Alfano, Founder and President of IAOVC. "We are working with a number of other Italian American organizations, as well as other groups, who oppose this attack on our heritage and history."

Ralph Contini, First National VP of UNICO National, headquartered in Fairfield, NJ, and longtime chair of its Columbus Day Committee stated, "The Paterson Board of Education has been influenced by the false narrative about Columbus based on fabrications and exaggerations. Columbus was dead centuries before the things he is being accused of. They should check the reputable facts and primary sources." At the UNICO National convention held last month, Contini introduced a resolution that was passed unanimously by UNICO delegates from across

the country stating, in part, "...UNICO National respectfully requests that the Paterson, NJ School District reinstate the Columbus Day holiday to its calendar immediately in respect to Italian American heritage in the United States." UNICO National Anti-Bias Chair, James Scannelli, commented, "We stand united in opposing these attacks on Columbus and our Italian American heritage."

William Schievella, Founder and President of the Italian American Police Society of New Jersey echoed the sentiments, "This just should not be happening in New Jersey. We have one of the largest populations of Italian Americans in the country and this is an insult. Columbus is an important symbol of acceptance to generations of our ancestors."

"Don't placate us with this bifurcated day for Indigenous People and Italian Heritage. No other group is told who or how they should celebrate," stated [Andre DiMino](#), IAOVC Executive Board member. "August 9 is worldwide Indigenous Peoples Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving and the month of November are dedicated to Native Americans, so why pit one group against another by creating this fabricated, double-named holiday."

IAOVC was instrumental in the recent Columbus Day controversy in Randolph, NJ where the school board eliminated Columbus Day and then reinstated it after a massive backlash that gained nationwide media coverage. IAOVC Vice President Frank Lorenzo stated, "We had great success



IAOVC Joins with Many Other Italian American Groups in NJ to Oppose Elimination of Columbus Day by Paterson BOE



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in Randolph and we expect to prevail in West Orange as well.” Lorenzo spearheaded IAOV’s landmark federal lawsuit against West Orange, NJ and its Mayor for violating Italian American civil rights by removing the Columbus monument.

Columbus Day is revered by generations of Italian Americans as an atonement and apology to Italian Americans who were subjected to abject discrimination, denigration and lynchings – the largest lynching in America of 11 Italian Americans occurred in New Orleans in 1891. In 1892, then President Benjamin Harrison declared that the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the new world be celebrated as Columbus Day to counter the negative treatment of Italian Americans so prevalent in those times.

IAOV is urging all to contact Kenneth L. Simmons, Paterson Board President at [klsward3@gmail.com](mailto:klsward3@gmail.com) and Paterson School Superintendent Eileen Shafer at 973-321-0980 or [eshafer@paterson.k12.nj.us](mailto:eshafer@paterson.k12.nj.us) to oppose the elimination of Columbus Day.

IAOV is different from all other Italian American organizations in that its sole focus and objective is to foster education to fight bias, stereotyping and discrimination against Italian Americans. IAOV is an IRS-Registered 501(c)3 non-profit.

IAOV issues a regular email newsletter, “[The Alfano Digest](#),” to more than 5,000 individuals and Italian American organizations nationwide. Written and compiled by Dr. Manny Alfano, Founder and President of IAOV, the Digest issues alerts on instances of bias, stereotyping, discrimination and defamation and activates the IAOV nationwide network of “Defenders” who respond through calls, emails, faxes, letters and demonstrations where necessary. The Digest contains informative and educational Italian American cultural and heritage information. To receive the Digest, email Dr. Alfano - [mannyalfano@comcast.net](mailto:mannyalfano@comcast.net).

To support IAOV’s efforts at defending and educating about Columbus and Italian American civil rights visit [iaov.org/donate](http://iaov.org/donate).

IAOV membership is open to individuals and all Italian American organizations to join as a coalition defending and celebrating Italian American heritage and culture. To join visit [iaov.org/membership](http://iaov.org/membership).

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