

Madam Chair, members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Richard SaBell, I am an American citizen. I am also the 1st Vice President for the Sons of Italy, Grand Lodge of Colorado, I am a member of the Italian American Business Association, and I am a Member and Immediate Past President (2009-2013), for the Columbus Day Parade Committee and I oppose this bill on many levels.

As an American citizen, I have the right to celebrate my country's National Holidays without anyone interfering in any way with my right to do so. The attempt by Representative Salazar to change the name of Columbus Day is a direct violation of that right. A right annually confirmed by Presidential Proclamation. As recently as October 2015, Democratic President, Barack Obama issued a proclamation reaffirming October 12th as Columbus Day and stating that "Columbus's legacy is embodied in the spirit of our Nation." President Obama further states that "Columbus's arrival in the New World inspired many and allowed for generations of Italians to follow – people whose Italian-American heritage contributes in immeasurable ways to making our country what it is, and who continue to help strengthen the friendship between the United States and Italy." The one day of the year when Italian American communities across the United States celebrate a National Holiday that celebrates us. To the Italian American community, the significance of celebrating Columbus Day can be compared to that of Saint Patrick's Day to Irish Americans and Martin Luther King Day to African Americans.

-Non-verifiable accusations against Columbus. de las Casas is not credible and only 8 yrs old in 1492. Matt Vergano/Frances Daly presentation/research.

-Verifiable documentation of atrocities committed by Indigenous People, against each other, against Europeans, and against Americans; rape, genocide, cannibalism, and slavery. Quote from Crow scout about the Sioux. Bob Giusto presentation/research.

-Verifiable documentation of Indigenous People, at least five separate tribes, owning black African slaves, and engaging in the slave trade. Matt Vergano presentation/research.

-Based on the same criteria for which Columbus is vilified, we absolutely cannot introduce or celebrate an Indigenous People Day.

---But let us be reasonable--- Honoring the heritage and traditions of Italian Americans, and the traditions and historical struggles of Indigenous Americans, are of equal importance. So, rather than fixate and obsess on historical negativity, verifiable or not, let us look toward the future and focus on the positives and growth of each culture. Let us celebrate each unique community with a holiday; Columbus Day in October and Indigenous Day in November, everybody wins.