

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 141

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the entertainment industry should stop the negative and unfair stereotyping of Italian-Americans, and should undertake an initiative to present Italian-Americans in a more balanced and positive manner.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 23, 2001

Mrs. ROUKEMA (for herself, Mr. LAFALCE, Mrs. MORELLA, Mr. GRUCCI, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. COYNE, Mr. LAMPSON, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. MASCARA, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BONIOR, Mr. ENGLISH, Mr. DEFazio, Mr. DOYLE, and Mr. MICA) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that the entertainment industry should stop the negative and unfair stereotyping of Italian-Americans, and should undertake an initiative to present Italian-Americans in a more balanced and positive manner.

Whereas the United States entertainment industry presents Italian-American characters and plots in a manner that is unbalanced, unfair, and damaging to the collective reputation of an estimated 20 million Americans of Italian heritage, the Nation's fifth largest ethnic group;

Whereas the Italic Studies Institute reviewed all films made in Hollywood from 1928 to the beginning of the year 2000 that featured either Italian or Italian-American characters, and found that an overwhelming 73 percent portray Italians and Italian-Americans in a negative light;

Whereas approximately 40 percent of Italian-American characters portrayed in film since 1928 were involved in organized crime, and since the film “The Godfather” was released in 1972 there have been over 300 mob movies released which portray Italians-Americans as involved in organized crime;

Whereas television is equally unbalanced in its presentation of Italian-Americans, and every week at least one program about Italian-American mobsters is presented on national television, and particularly the television program “The Sopranos” characterizes Italian-Americans as gangsters and profane and unlettered individuals;

Whereas, according to the Department of Justice, only about 5,000 people are involved in organized crime, including people of all ethnic backgrounds, and even if all 5,000 criminals in organized crime were Italian-American, that would constitute merely .0025 percent of the Nation’s estimated 20 million Americans of Italian descent;

Whereas the dearth of respectable Italian-American fictional characters on television is matched by an equally puzzling exclusion of Italian-Americans from documentaries about this country’s history and culture;

Whereas persons of Italian-American heritage have contributed greatly to the history of the United States, with such notable accomplishments as discovering the AIDS

virus, founding the FBI, sculpting the Lincoln Memorial, and establishing such major corporations as Barnes and Noble, Planters Peanuts, Tropicana Orange Juice, and Bank of America;

Whereas Italian-Americans have a long tradition of public service as police officers, fire-fighters, mayors, governors, and Members of Congress; and

Whereas despite such an admirable record of achievement, the media continue to stereotype Italian-Americans as gangsters or underachievers: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that the
 3 entertainment industry in the United States should imme-
 4 diately stop the negative and unfair stereotyping of
 5 Italian-Americans, particularly as profane criminals as
 6 portrayed in the television show “The Sopranos”, and
 7 should immediately undertake a serious initiative to
 8 present Italian-Americans in a more balanced and positive
 9 manner.

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