



City Council City of Danbury

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Government, Elections and Administration - Public Hearing – February 25, 2011
Testimony of Thomas J. Saadi

RE: SB 557 AN ACT DESIGNATING IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AND ITALIAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH.

Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin, and Honorable members of the GAE Committee, my name is Thomas J. Saadi, I am a member of the Danbury City Council representing Danbury's "Mighty 4th Ward" - traditional home to many of Danbury's Irish and Italian - American families for generations.

I am here today to urge a joint favorable vote of this Committee on Bill 557. I ask this both on behalf of the constituents I represent and as someone of Italian heritage whose grandmother's family toiled on the farms of Calabria, the coal mines of NY and ultimately the factories of Connecticut to make a better home for their children and grandchildren.

Although not of Irish heritage I feel like an adopted son of the Irish-American Community in greater Danbury which has shown me the hospitality, generosity and dedication to civic service of the Irish Community in Danbury and throughout our State.

It is only appropriate that Connecticut designate March as Irish and Italian – American Heritage Month as it is during this the month that these two communities celebrate Saints who embody the essence of sacrifice for family, sacrifice for community and service for a higher purpose – Saint Patrick and Saint Joseph. The celebrations of Saint Patrick's Day and Saint Joseph's Day are not tied to conquest or international controversy but are instead celebrated by those of Irish heritage and Italian heritage throughout the world as well as by and nearly all other communities throughout our State.

This bill simply seeks to recognize the contributions of generations of Irish and Italian Americans whose decedents number more than 66 million. In fact 20% of Connecticut residents claim Italian heritage and 18% claim Irish Heritage.

These contributions stretch back to the Revolutionary war in which thousands of Irish and Italian (soon to be Americans) fought for American independence. In fact, nine signers of Declaration of Independence were of Irish decent and two of Italian decent.

Irish and Italian Americans have contributed and prospered in every aspect of American life. One only has to look to the names of community & civic leaders, lists of decorated veterans, elected officials, laborers, teachers, doctors and any profession and position in private

and public life to see the contributions and positive impact the Irish and Italian American communities have had on our State and Nation.

They worked, often times in the most deplorable conditions, for pennies a day so their families – their descendants, many of whom are in this room today, could have a better life.

Finally, on a personal note, nearly 20 years ago when I worked for Rep. Richard Tulisano he initiated the Annual St. Joseph's Day celebration at the Capitol. Rep Tulisano taught me that pride in one's heritage did not have to conflict with loyalty to our Nation and that we can celebrate heritage without compromising patriotism.

Therefore, I ask that this committee and the General Assembly pass this bill. I am happy to respond to any questions Committee members may have.