

SENATE RESOLUTION

8650

By Senators Fortunato and Lovick

1 WHEREAS, In 1890, the Police Chief for the city of New Orleans
2 was murdered and reportedly whispered to witnesses a racial slur
3 against Italians as the culprits, leading to the mass arrest of
4 people of Italian descent; and

5 WHEREAS, 19 of the Americans of Italian descent arrested were
6 eventually indicted, nine of whom were put on trial, six being
7 acquitted and three declared mistrials, all were placed back in
8 prison on other manufactured charges; and

9 WHEREAS, After the acquittals, many New Orleans residents were
10 outraged by the verdicts, a mob gathered outside the parish prison,
11 numbering in the thousands as anti-Italian sentiment was stirred by
12 assertions of prominent figures in the city that the trials were
13 corrupted by the mafia; and

14 WHEREAS, On March 14, 1891, a day after the trial, 11 Americans
15 of Italian descent were lynched over their alleged involvement in the
16 death of the city's police chief. Their bodies were indignantly
17 mutilated and displayed for the public to see; and

18 WHEREAS, Historical accounts implicated New Orleans' political
19 leadership as being complicit in these crimes, and reports in the
20 national news characterized the lynchings as an act of just vengeance
21 rather than racially motivated violence; and

22 WHEREAS, These crimes were committed during a period of American
23 history marked by a rising tide of anti-Italian sentiment, stoked by

1 economic fears and physical differences of their darker
2 Mediterranean skin color; and

3 WHEREAS, Although the United States government paid \$25,000
4 in reparations to the families a year following the lynching, no
5 one has ever been brought to justice; and

6 WHEREAS, The Sons and Daughters of Italy worked to gain
7 formal recognition of this atrocity, urging the city of New
8 Orleans to take responsibility; and

9 WHEREAS, The mayor of New Orleans issued a formal
10 Proclamation of Apology in April 2019, after remaining silent
11 for 130 years for the city's complicity in one of the largest
12 lynchings in American history; and

13 WHEREAS, The United States congress declared the first
14 Italian-American heritage and culture month in October 1989,
15 coinciding with the celebration of Columbus day, authorizing and
16 requesting the President of the United States to issue a
17 proclamation calling upon the people of our great nation to
18 observe the month with appropriate ceremonies and activities;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State
20 Senate recognize the numerous contributions of Americans of
21 Italian descent to the cultural and economic landscape of
22 Washington and the entire country and join in celebration of
23 Italian Heritage month in October; and

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Washington State Senate
25 recommit itself to shining a light on forgotten injustices and
26 applaud the city of New Orleans for righting this historical
27 wrong perpetrated on this group of immigrants who silently
28 endured decades of discrimination and oppression.

29 I, Sarah Bannister, Secretary of the Senate,
30 do hereby certify that this is a true and
31 correct copy of Senate Resolution 8650,
32 adopted by the Senate
33 February 28, 2022

34 SARAH BANNISTER
35 Secretary of the Senate