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JCCIA AND COALITION OF ETHNIC GROUPS DEMAND CHICAGO BOARD OF EDUCATION RESCIND DECISION ON COLUMBUS DAY *ISBE and Board Rules Violated*

Chicago, IL, March 4, 2020—The Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans (JCCIA), along with numerous Italian American organizations, a coalition of Irish, Jewish, Polish and African American ethnic group members among others, and various elected officials, demand that the Chicago Board of Education rescind its decision on Columbus Day, as it is in direct violation of the Illinois State Board of Education code and Chicago Board of Education rules.

These groups together will not stand for the Chicago Board of Education usurping Columbus Day.

“It’s important to point out that we stand together, and annually celebrate Indigenous People’s Day— on the day that, in 2017, the State signed into law...the last Monday of September,” said Sergio Giangrande, president of the JCCIA.

The coalition of groups states the Board violated Illinois state schools code (105 ILCS 5/24-2), Sec. 24-2, Par. (a)(b)(1)(2). In its procedure to eliminate Columbus Day, the Board failed to “...first holds a public hearing about the proposal. The entity shall provide notice preceding the public hearing to both educators and parents.” Citing the February 26, 2020, Chicago Board of Education Agenda, there is no notice of a Columbus Day rescission discussion. Accordingly, the Chicago Board of Education vote was both procedurally and legally wrong.

Specifically, the Chicago Board of Education violated the public hearing rule by not properly placing a substantive matter requiring school board vote on its agenda for public discussion.

Secondly, once it inappropriately voted to amend the motion, the chair must have immediately recognized the substance change and tabled the motion for the subsequent meeting—giving proper notice of the motion on the table.

Thirdly, the decision to vote away Columbus Day as a school holiday is contrary to the Illinois State Board of Education and the applicable statute.

“The historical legacy of any individual is and should be subject to debate,” adds Giangrande. “That debate should not give license to the wholesale removal of a symbol that was a beacon of hope for millions of maligned Italians who helped create the beauty of this country.”

In addition to sending a letter to the members of the Chicago Board of Education and the Illinois State Board of Education, the same correspondence is being sent to Mayor Lightfoot, Governor Pritzker, Deputy Governor Ruiz, Illinois House and Senate Leaders, Illinois legislators that sit on the House and Senate education committees, all Italian American elected officials in our state, the Illinois delegation to the U.S. Congress, U.S. Senator Durbin, U.S. Senator Duckworth, U.S. Education Secretary DeVos, and President Trump.

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