



Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: media@jccia.com

Shocking find by Italian American Community puts Chicago Park District on notice

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Amer. Assoc. Ital. Teachers

Arcolian dental Society

Assoc. Regionale Sicilia (ARSA)

Associazione Veneti nel Mondo

Beato Giovanni Liccio Societa'

Blush, Inc.

Calabresi in America

Casa Italia

CIACO

Columbian Club

Elk Grove Village Sister Cities

First Nations Bank

Flowers of Italy

Fra Noi

Hardcore Italians

IA Civic Organization of Berwyn

IA Exec of Trans. (IAET)

IA Human Relations Foundation

IA Political Coalition

IANU Italo National Union

IA Veterans Museum

IA Veterans Posts/Auxiliaries 1, 2, 4

IA Women's Organization

Ital. Catholic Federation 392

JCCIA Women's Division

JCCIA Young Professionals

JRC Investments, Inc.

Justinian Society

Little Italy Chicago (LICNA)

Marchegiana Society

Mazzini Verdi Club

National IA Sports Hall Of Fame

Old Neighborhood IA Club

Panoramus

SS. Maria di Costantinopoli

San Francesco Di Paola

San Giovanni Bosco

San Rocco Di Potenza

Maria SS Lauretana

Society of OLMC

Shrine Our Lady of Pompeii

Società Santa Fara di Cinisi

Sons and Daughters of Italy

Unico Chicago West Suburban

Wesley Realty

CHICAGO — After a Freedom of Information Act request to the Chicago Park District (CPD) about the Christopher Columbus statues removed this past summer, attorneys for The Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans (JCCIA) found a plethora of paperwork signed over fifty years ago.

Included was a signed agreement that in essence states, "The Park District will, in perpetuity, obtain the written approval of the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans before making any substantial change to Columbus Plaza or the statue." That did not happen. The Arrigo Park statue was removed in the middle of the night in July, without written notice.

Ron Onesti, President of the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans, wrote a four-page letter addressed to the Chicago Park District Board and its Legal Counsel. In it, he referenced the legal basis and the history of the agreement with the CPD, and the reasons why this is a Park District issue rather than a City of Chicago concern. In fact, the letter also infers that the Mayor removed those statues "temporarily" without jurisdiction as the Chicago Park District, an independent municipality, should not have allowed the City of Chicago to interfere with the agreement between the CPD and the JCCIA.

Attached to the letter are ten exhibits, including the signed agreement, meeting minutes, letters, and the program from the dedication on October 10, 1973. [Exhibits found here.](#)

"We are hopeful that the Chicago Park District will honor what we feel to be a solid, enforceable contract with us," said Onesti. "These statues are very important to our community and represent generations of traditions, including the one day of the year that we celebrate our culture on the federal Columbus Day holiday. We know the original intention of removing the statues was one of safety, but that was months ago, and it is time to return them. I look forward to a dialog towards a resolve of the Park District obtaining the statues from the city and putting them back to their original locations."

The JCCIA, a 501c3 corporation, is the congress of over fifty Italian American organizations in the Chicago area.