



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

# **Senator Savino Hosts Italian American State Legislators Conference**

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June 16, 2010



(Albany, NY) Senator Diane J. Savino, President of the Italian American Legislators, hosted the organization's annual conference, this Sunday, June 13th and Monday, June 14th. The two day event, attended by participants from the entire state, coincided with the 150th Anniversary of the Unification of Italy and was a celebration of Italy's rich culture and its contributions to this country, featuring performances, panel discussions, as well as informational lectures on the unique issues that aging Italian Americans face.

Dr. Giuseppe Faustini, gave a historical lecture on Italian American's contributions to the country's unification and Ellis Island Historian, Barry Moreno, recounted vivid depictions of life for New York's Italian immigrants, many of which passed through the Ellis Island Immigration Center.

Attendees also had the opportunity to listen to a panel discussion, by the Italy-American Chamber of Commerce, the Italian Tourist Board, and Dr. Mignone, from the Italian Hospital Society, on tourism, business and trade issues between the two countries. Italy, is the number one travel destination for Americans, however only 7% of the country's exports come to the United States.

"Tourists not only love Italy's art and architecture, they also love the food, the lifestyle and the products, and they want to be able to continue purchasing these products when they return to the US," said Dr. Mignone.

The conference's final discussion, "Health Care and the Aged", featured a panel discussion on the lack of services offered to Italians and Italian Americans, living in New York. More than 55% of Italian seniors do not speak English, and the lack of Italian speakers in nursing homes and in the health industry, make it particularly difficult for seniors to get the services they need. The NYS Office of the Aging was on hand to provide information on what programs are available to Italian seniors.

The event ended with a gala dinner, where attendees were treated to a performance by the Italian American musical trio, Tre Bella, as well as Staten Island's own Amy Zavatto, a noted food and wine writer, who gave a presentation on the art of the cocktail.

Senator Savino, who will end her two year term as President of the Italian American Legislators Conference, this year, has been a strong advocate of the Italian

American community. In addition to promoting Italian heritage and culture, she has been a passionate critic of media depictions of Italians. She was instrumental in restoring Advanced Placement Italian Language in our high schools, as well as successfully fighting to save Our Lady of Loretto Church in Brooklyn, a 102-year-old church, built by Italian immigrants, which was threatened with demolition.

“As a proud descendant of Italian Americans, it is an honor to serve as President of the Italian American Legislators Conference. The history of Italian immigrants is also our history; they have contributed to every aspect of our society, including the arts, architecture, politics, literature, as well as labor movements. Unfortunately, many American descendants of Italy have not had the opportunity to be exposed to our rich heritage. That is why it is important to promote awareness through programs like these and through the many organizations and individuals that keep our culture alive,” said Senator Diane J. Savino.

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