



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

Savino and Klein Announce Restoration of NYS Italian Regents High School Exam

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Protects Study of Italian Language in Schools

TUCKAHOE, NY – State Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), State Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), and representatives from the Westchester Italian Cultural Center and the Sons of Italy announced the restoration of the NYS Italian Regents high school exam at a rally on Thursday. Last week the NYS Senate saved the exam from extinction when it passed the final piece of this year's budget. Attendees rallied in support of this important achievement and to celebrate Italian culture.

"Italian is inextricably tied to all aspects of modern society and culture, including the arts, literature, philosophy, architecture, even the labor movement. That is why I am proud to have been instrumental in preserving the Italian Regents Exam, which would have drastically reduced the number of students studying the language," said State Senator Diane J. Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn).

"The Italian Regents exam is a key incentive to high school students across New York State to study Italian and learn about their culture and history. By celebrating and promoting Italian heritage, we can help keep this beautiful language alive for generations to come. I commend Senator Savino for taking the lead in this important fight," said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

Following a request from the NYS Education Department earlier this summer, the State Senate approved additional funding to allow for the administration of the June 2011 Foreign Language Regents Exam in Italian, as well as for the January 2011 Regents Exam and translation of exams into Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

“We are so pleased that the Italian Regents has been restored. It is important that students have the option to study this beautiful language as part of their regular course of study – and that they are able to earn regents credits for it. We salute the NY Senate for all their efforts in restoring the funding, especially Senators Jeff Klein and Diane Savino,” Maria Masciotti, Executive Director of the Westchester Italian Cultural Center.

While the Senate was able to restore funding for the Italian exam, it only applies to the administration of the exam for the school year ending in 2011. The Education Department has already served warning to superintendents and principals of public, charter, private, and religious schools that if future funding is not secured, the exam may be cancelled for 2012.

“It is essential to retain the Regents Exam for the preservation of the Italian Language in our High Schools and beyond,” said Carlo Sclafani, Co-President of the Westchester Coalition of the Italian American Organizations and Chair of the Modern Languages Department, Westchester Community College, Valhalla, NY.

“The number of students taking the Italian Regents exam over the years has increased. To consider elimination of the exam would have a negative impact on the advancement of Italian Language and Culture, since students would pursue a different language in order to obtain the Advanced Regents Diploma,” said Lina Astarita, President, Order Sons of Italy in America, Garibaldi Lodge #2583, Eastchester, NY.

“As long as there are Regents exams being offered in any Foreign language, then the Italian Language exam should definitely not be eliminated. It would give the impression that the Italian Language is not as important as the others,” said Mario Cermele, President, Order Sons of Italy in America, Antonio Meucci Lodge, White Plains, NY.

"Last week the New York State Senate saved the Italian Regents exam from extinction. This extraordinary result has been possible thanks to the advocacy efforts of many Senators of the State of NY, particularly Senator Klein and Senator Savino, who have worked in close cooperation with several American authorities as well as the Embassy of Italy in Washington, the Italian American Organizations, many prominent Italian and Italian-American community leaders and the Consulate General itself. This positive result encourages the Italian Institutions to keep supporting the promotion of the Italian language as a major tool to consolidate the Italian cultural heritage in the US," said Deputy Consul Marco Alberti of the Consulate General of Italy in New York.

At the event Senators Klein and Savino were joined by numerous other community members and Italian civic and education leaders, including: Tuckahoe Mayor John Fitzpatrick; Ilardi Costa, Director of the Italian American Committee on Education (IACE); the Honorable Francis A. Nicolai, Chairman of Board of Trustees of the Westchester Italian Cultural Center; Robert Ferrito, State Treasurer of the Order Sons of Italy in America; Laura Raffiani, Corresponding Secretary, Order Sons of Italy in America; Dr. Joseph Scelsa, President of the Italian American Museum in New York; and representatives from FIAME Federation of Italian American Educators.

"This is a sweet victory in this battle but the war is certainly not over. Next year's budget will be just as challengin, if not worse; we must continue fighting to ensure that the Italian Regents exam is not jeopardized again," said State Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island).