



**11th Biennial State Convention
Officer Reports
First Vice President, Richard SaBell**

Brothers and Sisters,

The last two years were busy for the Colorado CSJ, and for the National CSJ, responding to repeated attacks against the Celebration of Columbus Day across the country. The one day of the year when Italian American communities across the Nation celebrate a National Holiday that celebrates us. In October of 2015, Denver City Council passed a one day proclamation declaring Columbus Day as Indigenous People Day. CSJ responded locally and nationally with a letter writing campaign opposing their actions. In the spring of 2016, House Representative Joe Salazar introduced a Bill to replace Columbus Day, as a State Holiday, with Indigenous People Day. Again CSJ responded locally and nationally, with National CSJ President, Kevin Kaira, calling for all CSJ Officers, and OSIA Lodge Presidents to ask their membership to voice their opposition to the Colorado House of Representatives. They were directed to specifically target the nine members of the House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee, appointed to hear the first reading of the Bill. New York CSJ President Lou Gallo also organized a special group to write one on one to each Representative of the Committee. At the local level, many members of the Italian American community across Colorado began communicating, researching, and preparing to testify at the State Capitol in defense of Columbus Day. After the Bill was presented to the Committee and after many hours of testimony from both sides, the subsequent vote was 7-2 in favor of Columbus Day. October of 2016 again saw the Denver City Council pass a proclamation declaring Columbus Day as Indigenous People Day.

As promised, Representative Salazar introduced a Bill in the spring of 2017 to repeal Columbus Day as a legal holiday in Colorado. Within days CSJ Officers and Members across the country were again mobilized. In addition, National President Kaira contacted the National Headquarters of the Knights of Columbus in Connecticut who responded by launching a national letter writing campaign of their own along with bringing in a lobbyist. The Bill again went before the House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee, where it was upheld and passed along for second reading. Second reading, before the Local Government Committee, was again a grueling day of testimony from both sides, culminating in a surprising 7-6 vote defeating Salazar's Bill. In addition to thanking CSJ President Kevin Kaira, New York CSJ President Lou Gallo, Knights of Columbus Officers Jim Caffrey, Andrew Walther, and lobbyist Matt Knoedler, Columbus Day Parade Committee President Rita DeFrange, Sons of Italy Lodge Presidents and members, Tom Tancredo, and the many individuals in the community who rallied in defense of Columbus Day, special thanks goes to the Southern Colorado Sons of Italy Lodge for their role in the final outcome.

Respectfully,

Richard SaBell
First Vice President, OSIA Grand Lodge of Colorado
Chair, Colorado OSIA Commission for Social Justice