

**SUSPENSION OF AP ITALIAN DAMAGES THE BRIDGE THAT EXISTS
BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES**

***Joint Statement by National Italian American Organizations
On Suspension of Italian Language Study Program in the United States***

New York, NY, January 12, 2009 – The leaders of national Italian American organizations, and of Italian language studies advocates today issued a joint statement regarding the suspension of the Advanced Placement Program in Italian Language and Culture by the College Board.

The statement is being issued by Margaret I. Cuomo, M.D., president of the Italian Language Foundation (ILF), of New York, and the presidents of the four founding organizations of the ILF: Louis Tallarini, president of the Columbus Citizens Foundation and Chairman of the ILF, Salvatore Zizza, president of the National Italian American Foundation, of Washington, D.C., Philip R. Piccigallo, PH.D., National Executive Director of Order Sons of Italy in America, of Washington, D.C., and Kathleen Strozza, president of UNICO National.

Statement:

We are deeply disappointed that the Advanced Placement Program of The College Board, commonly known as AP Italian, will be suspended following the 2008-2009 academic year.

We know from experience that The College Board reached this decision, which was based on financial considerations, after making substantial good faith efforts to sustain the program. We were proud to have been able to offer over \$500,000 in contingent commitments toward the \$1.5 million needed to ensure the program's future. However, these funds were contingent on commitments from the Republic of Italy, which did not materialize. This is especially disappointing because in January 2008, the Republic of Italy, through the Embassy of Italy in Washington, D.C, was alerted that AP Italian was in danger of being cancelled.

The increase in knowledge of the Italian language will enhance the appreciation and respect for Italian culture, which will benefit bilateral relations in the areas of industry, trade, tourism, culture and education. We deeply regret on behalf of the American educators, who have dedicated themselves to teaching Italian, and on behalf of the tens of thousands of businessmen and women, particularly in Italy, who work tirelessly to develop and maintain the flow of ideas, goods and services between our two countries.

The suspension of the AP Italian Program should be especially disappointing for Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who traveled to New York City to deliver a check for \$300,000 to the College Board in 2003, to launch the AP Italian Program – the first new language AP Program in fifty years to be added by the College Board. Together with \$200,000 from NIAF, OSIA, and UNICO National, the \$500,000 requirement to establish the AP Italian Program was fulfilled. Prime Minister Berlusconi has often emphasized the importance of supporting Italian language education in the United States of America. Discussions with Ministers Bondi and Frattini in the government of the Republic of Italy resulted in expressions of support and an understanding of the significance and importance of the AP Italian Program.

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For all these reasons, it is particularly surprising that the Republic of Italy, a nation we hold dear in our hearts, is declining to support the study of its language here in the United States, a policy that has already been put into practice by the governments of China, Japan and Russia on behalf of their countries' languages. The suspension of AP Italian damages the bridge that exists between the Republic of Italy and the United States.

It is our goal to reinstate the AP Program in Italian as a first-class language experience in the United States of America and around the world.

National Italian American organizations remain committed to AP Italian, and ready to step forward again if the Republic of Italy can provide financial support.

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