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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 155

Offered February 1, 2008

Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Order Sons of Italy in America.

Patron—Watkins

WHEREAS, on June 24, 2005, the Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315 of the Order Sons of Italy in America hosted the 29th Biennial State Convention of the Grand Lodge of Virginia in Richmond, celebrating the national fraternal organization's 100th anniversary; and

WHEREAS, the Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA), established by Vincenzo Sellaro on June 7, 1905, to preserve Italian American heritage and culture, claims 700 prestigious chapters with 750,000 members; and

WHEREAS, overcoming hardship and discrimination, early Italian immigrants and their children became part of the intricate fabric of American society in less than 100 years; today, their descendants number nearly 16 million, and citizens with at least one Italian grandparent number 26 million; and

WHEREAS, Italian Americans have grown in spirit and prosperity because they are passionately committed to strong family values, the welfare and education of their children, as well as the elevation and enrichment of the lives of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, throughout the country's history, Italian Americans have fought for equality and freedom: three Italian regiments, totaling 1,500 men, fought in the American Revolution; Giuseppe Garibaldi, dubbed the "Jeb Stuart of Italy," was offered a generalship in the Union Army by President Abraham Lincoln; Sergeant John Basilone, killed in the battle of Iwo Jima, was the only enlisted Marine to receive the Navy Cross for Valor and the Congressional Medal of Honor; and Captain Don Gentile of the United States Army Air Force, hailed by Dwight D. Eisenhower as his "one man air force," was awarded the Distinguished Cross; and

WHEREAS, Filippo Mazzei, a lifelong friend and neighbor of Thomas Jefferson, inspired the famous phrase "All men are created equal" when he wrote, "All men are by nature equally free and independent"; and

WHEREAS, Costantino Brumidi, considered the "Michelangelo" of the United States Capitol, painted the building's exquisite interior dome; Dominick Argento, one of the most famous and frequently performed twentieth century opera composers, received the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his song cycles, *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*; Don DeLillo, one of the most noteworthy contemporary American novelists, wrote *Americana*, *Great Jones Street*, *Libra*, *White Noise*, and *Underworld*; and Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso, dissatisfied with conformity in the 1950s, were two prominent "Beat Generation" poets; and

WHEREAS, resourceful Italian American entrepreneurs contributed much to the growth and stability of the American economy, including Amadeo Pietro Giannini, who established the Bank of America, one of the nation's largest banks; Generoso Pope, the first Italian American millionaire, who transformed Colonial Sand and Stone Company into the largest building materials supplier in the country; William Cafaro and Edward J. DeBartolo, Sr., who developed the American shopping mall; Leonard Riggio of Barnes & Noble and Robert DiRomualdo of Borders, who command the two largest bookstore chains; and Fred DeLuca, who at age 17 started his first sandwich shop, which evolved into 13,136 Subways in 64 countries; and

WHEREAS, the Italian American generation of the current era is replete with glittering stars and engaging personalities, including, among many others, Yogi Berra, Joe DiMaggio, Joe Montana, Tommy Lasorda, Jimmy Durante, Frank Sinatra, Francis Ford Coppola, Madonna, Mario Cuomo, and Rudy Giuliani; and

WHEREAS, modern Italian Americans owe a great debt of gratitude to the sacrifices of their immigrant ancestors, and all Americans may be exceedingly proud of the illustrious accomplishments and invaluable contributions made by Italian Americans, past and present; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commend and congratulate the Order Sons of Italy in America and the Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315 of Virginia on the occasion of their 100th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Giuseppe Verdi Lodge #315 in appreciation of the lodge's efforts to preserve Italian American heritage and culture and as an expression of the best wishes of the General Assembly.