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Coalition of Italo-American Organizations Speech: Draft

Geraldine Ferraro

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THANK YOU, MARIO, FOR THAT TERRIFIC INTRODUCTION. I'M DELIGHTED YOU WERE ABLE TO TAKE TIME OFF FROM YOUR BUSY LECTURING SCHEDULE TO BE HERE TONIGHT.

IT'S GREAT TO SEE SO MANY FRIENDLY FACES. THE LAST TIME I WAS WITH THE GOVERNOR, WE WENT ON A QUIET STROLL DOWN FIFTH AVENUE WITH JUST A FEW CLOSE FRIENDS.

COMING HERE TONIGHT TO BE PART OF THE FIRST ANNUAL DINNER OF THE COALITION OF ITALO-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS, YOU JUST HAVE TO BE EXCITED ABOUT EVERYTHING OUR PEOPLE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED IN NEW YORK STATE. THE FACT IS, NEW YORK'S ITALIAN-AMERICANS HAVE EXPLODED ON THE POLITICAL SCENE. WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICS, WE'RE NOT SAYING "CIAO", WE'RE SAYING "SIAMO ARRIVATI."

WE'VE GOT ALFRED DELBELLO, A GREAT LEADER FROM WESTCHESTER COUNTY AND AN OUTSTANDING LT. GOVERNOR.

WE'VE GOT MARIO CUOMO, A NATIONAL LEADER IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND A REAL PATRIARCH IN THE AMERICAN FAMILY.

AND -- WE'RE BEING BIPARTISAN, AT LEAST FOR TONIGHT -- WE HAVE NEW YORK'S FIRST-EVER ITALIAN-AMERICAN U.S. SENATOR, ALPHONSE D'AMATO.

I HAVE A STORY ABOUT AL, ONE I HOPE HE'LL REMEMBER. IT WAS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, BEFORE I WAS NOMINATED FOR VICE PRESIDENT. THERE WAS A NEW YORK STATE PARTY IN WASHINGTON, AND AL RAN INTO ONE OF THE STAFF PEOPLE FROM MY CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE. AT THE TIME, AL, YOU OFFERED SOME ADVICE FOR MY POLITICAL CAREER. YOU SAID YOU THOUGHT I'D MAKE A GREAT VICE PRESIDENT. NOT A GREAT SENATOR, BUT A GREAT VICE PRESIDENT.

AL, I KNOW YOU STILL THINK SO, AND AS A FELLOW ITALIAN-AMERICAN, I APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT.

CIAO/2

I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU, I'M PROUD OF THE PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE.

IT IS EXCITING THAT WE HAVE COME SO FAR, AND ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH. BUT IT IS NOT SURPRISING. IT IS THE RESULT OF A BELIEF IN HARD WORK AND OPPORTUNITY, LOVE OF COUNTRY AND HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

THOSE ARE THE VALUES WE LEARNED FROM OUR PARENTS, AND WHICH WE HAVE PASSED ON TO OUR CHILDREN.

MY OWN STORY IS NOT DIFFERENT FROM YOUR OWN. MY FATHER CAME HERE FROM THE SMALL TOWN OF MARCIANISE, IN CASSERTA. HE CAME TO THIS LAND OF GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY, ^{BELIEVING} KNOWING THAT IF YOU WORKED HARD, ^{AND KEPT FAITH WITH YOUR GOD,} AND PLAYED BY THE RULES, YOU WOULD CARVE OUT A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY.

MY MOTHER SHARED THAT DREAM. ^{BELIEF.} AND WHEN SHE WAS WIDOWED WITH TWO YOUNG CHILDREN, SHE WENT BACK TO WORK, IN THE GARMENT DISTRICT, TO MAKE SURE MY BROTHER AND I WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITIES SHE NEVER HAD.

AND BECAUSE SHE WORKED HARD, I WORKED HARD. I WASN'T ABOUT TO LET HER DOWN. AFTER COLLEGE I TAUGHT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK BY DAY, AND WENT TO LAW SCHOOL AT NIGHT. IT WAS HARD WORK, BUT I LEARNED THE ONE LESSON MY MOTHER AND FATHER MOST WANTED TO TEACH ME: HARD WORK PAYS OFF.

EACH OF YOU KNOWS WHAT I MEAN. YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS CAME TO THIS COUNTRY WITH DREAMS FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR THEIR CHILDREN. THEY SACRIFICED AND STRUGGLED AND WATCHED AS THEIR KIDS GREW UP. AND THEY WERE REWARDED WHEN WE GREW UP AND BUILT BETTER LIVES FOR OURSELVES AND OUR CHILDREN. IT IS AS TRUE TODAY AS IT EVER WAS, ^{"NOI PONIAMO I NOSTRI} ~~"I NOSTRI SOGNI~~ SOGNI NEI FIGLI -- E CON FEDE IN DIO, LAVORIAMO AFFINCHÉ QUESTI SOGNI SI ~~SONO NEI NOSTRI BAMBINI -- CON LA FEDE IN DIO LAVORIAMO~~ REALIZZINO.

OUR PARENTS CAME TO THIS NEW LAND TO MAKE A NEW LIFE. AND THEY CAME TO LOVE AMERICA AS THEY LOVED ITALY.

WE HAVE NOT CUT OUR TIES TO THE OLD LAND. AS AMERICANS OF ITALIAN ANCESTRY, WE ARE PROUD TO SAY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS NO STRONGER OR MORE RELIABLE ALLY THAN THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY.

WHEN THERE WAS A NEED FOR A PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IN THE SINAI, ITALIAN TROOPS SERVED SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH U.S. FORCES.

WHEN THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE WAS FORMED IN BEIRUT, YOUNG AMERICAN MARINES WERE JOINED BY YOUNG ITALIAN SOLDIERS.

AND WHEN THE CARTER-MONDALE ADMINISTRATION SOUGHT TO IMPLEMENT ITS TWO-TRACK STRATEGY INVOLVING THE DEPLOYMENT OF CRUISE MISSILES IN EUROPE, ITALY PLAYED A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OF THE POLICY. AND WHEN IT CAME TIME TO PUT THOSE CRUISE MISSILES IN COMISO, THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT STUCK BY ITS COMMITMENT TO THE ALLIANCE.

THE FACT IS THAT ITALY HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT IT IS A FRIEND AND ALLY SECOND TO NONE. IT IS TIME WE RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF ITALY'S CONTRIBUTION TO WESTERN SECURITY BY MAKING SURE ROME IS INCLUDED IN ALL CONSULTATIONS INVOLVING THE INNER CIRCLE OF NATO POWERS.

WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT BEING A GOOD ALLY IS A TWO-WAY STREET, AND INVOLVES MORE THAN MILITARY SECURITY. IT ALSO MEANS MUTUAL COOPERATION TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC SECURITY.

THE ECONOMIES OF THE WEST ARE ALL LINKED TO EACH OTHER. THE WAY WE HANDLE OUR DOMESTIC FISCAL MATTERS HAVE IMPORTANT CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR PARTNERS. IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING, WE MUST SEEK TO COORDINATE OUR ECONOMIC POLICIES,

TO INSURE THAT ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS ACHIEVED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC.

THE WORK OF THIS ORGANIZATION -- AND ALL YOUR MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS -- IS IN GREAT MEASURE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROMOTING GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF ITALIAN-AMERICANS. LIKE SO MANY OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS, OUR PATH TO SUCCESS IN AMERICA HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN EASY. THERE HAS BEEN DISCRIMINATION, AND WE HAVE HAD TO STRUGGLE TO OVERCOME IT. BUT WE HAVE OVERCOME.

IT USED TO BE THAT THE ONLY IMAGE OF ITALIAN WOMEN ONE EVER SAW ON TELEVISION WAS OF A WOMAN LEANING OUT A WINDOW IN AN URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD SHOUTING, "ANTHONY!"

BUT TODAY, ALMOST EVERY NIGHT OF THE WEEK, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAN SEE AN ITALIAN WOMAN ON TELEVISION TALKING ABOUT ARMS CONTROL, AND FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICITS, AND THE OTHER GREAT ISSUES OF THE DAY.

~~ALL OF YOU HAVE HELPED MAKE THIS DREAM COME TRUE.~~

ALL OF YOU, THROUGH THE WORK YOU DO EVERY DAY, HAVE HELPED TO OPEN THE DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL ITALIAN-AMERICANS IN THIS COUNTRY. THE VICTORIES WE HAVE WON, WE HAVE WON TOGETHER. THE VICTORIES WE WILL WIN IN THE FUTURE WILL BE SHARED JUST THE SAME WAY.

I AM HONORED TO BE HERE. I SALUTE THE OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS YOU HONOR TONIGHT. WITH THEM, AND WITH YOU, I SAY, SONO ORGOLIOSA DI ESSERE ITALIANA.