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Hartford Italian Fest Speech: Draft

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DRAFT #1, David Keshgarian

OGGI L'ATMOSFERA D'ITALIA E MOLTO IN EVIDENZA NELLA
FRANKLIN AVENUE. SONO MOLTO ^{CONTENTA} DI ESSERE QUI CON TUTTI I MIEI
COMPAESANI. CHE GODIATE LA FESTA!

(WHICH MEANS: TODAY THE ATMOSPHERE OF ITALY IS VERY
MUCH ALIVE ON FRANKLIN AVENUE. I AM VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE
WITH ALL MY PAISANOS. HAVE A GREAT TIME AT THE FESTIVAL.)

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY FOR
THIS CELEBRATION OF OUR ITALIAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE. WHAT
I LOVE MOST ABOUT THESE FESTIVALS -- AND WE HAVE THE FEAST
OF SAN GENNARO IN LITTLE ITALY EVERY YEAR -- IS THAT THEY
REFLECT EVERYTHING THAT IS BEST ABOUT THE ITALIAN-AMERICAN
COMMUNITY -- HIGH ON PRIDE, HIGH ON TRADITION, AND HIGH
IN CALORIES.

~~I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE GREAT LEADERS OF
HARTFORD WHO ARE~~ HERE TODAY: LT. GOV. JOSEPH FAULISO, STATE
SEN. BILL DIBELLA, AND REP. TONY PALERMINO.

AND THERE ARE ALSO THE HONORARY ITALIANS -- MY
GOOD FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
BARBARA KENNELLY, AND YOUR OUTSTANDING GOVERNOR, BILL O'NEILL.
IT'S NOT THEIR FAULT THEY WEREN'T LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE BORN
ITALIAN.

OF COURSE, I'M HERE TO OFFER GREETINGS FROM A GREAT
FRIEND OF HARTFORD'S ITALIAN COMMUNITY -- WALTER MONDALI (get
Gerry to pronounce with Italian accent.)

TALKING ABOUT THESE POLITICAL LEADERS BRINGS TO MIND
^{one other} ~~ONE WHO ISN'T~~. NOBODY KNEW AND LOVED THE PEOPLE AND CUSTOMS

OF FRANKLIN AVENUE MORE THAN ELLA GRASSO. AS THE FIRST WOMAN AND THE FIRST ITALIAN-AMERICAN IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY TO RUN FOR VICE PRESIDENT, I'LL TELL YOU THIS: HAVING ELLA TO LEAD THE WAY MADE THE DOORS OPEN FASTER THAN THEY WOULD HAVE WITHOUT HER.

THE FOOD AND MUSIC WE ENJOY TODAY ARE PART OF THE HERITAGE WE SHARE. BUT IN A WAY, AS WE REAFFIRM OUR LOVE FOR OUR OLD COUNTRY, WHAT WE ARE REALLY DOING IS CELEBRATING OUR NEW COUNTRY.

MY FATHER CAME TO AMERICA FROM A SMALL TOWN CALLED MARCIANISE, IN CASSERTA. LIKE SO MANY IMMIGRANTS, HE CAME EXPECTING TO FIND STREETS PAVED WITH GOLD. INSTEAD, HE FOUND A LAND OF GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY, WHERE IF YOU WORKED HARD AND PLAYED BY THE RULES, YOU COULD SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY.

MY MOTHER SHARED THAT DREAM. AND THAT'S WHY, WHEN SHE WAS WIDOWED WITH TWO YOUNG CHILDREN, SHE WENT BACK TO WORK, IN NEW YORK CITY'S GARMENT DISTRICT.

SHE DID IT FOR THE SAME REASON MILLIONS OF PARENTS HAVE: SO HER CHILDREN WOULD HAVE OPPORTUNITIES SHE NEVER DID.

AND BECAUSE SHE WORKED SO HARD, I WORKED HARD. I WASN'T ABOUT TO LET HER DOWN. I BECAME A TEACHER, AND WHILE I TAUGHT DAYS, I WENT TO LAW SCHOOL NIGHTS. IT WAS HARD WORK, BUT MY MOTHER HAD TAUGHT ME TO BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A COUNTRY THAT REWARDS HARD WORK.

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. SOME OF YOUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS CAME TO THIS COUNTRY WITH THE SAME DREAMS AS MY FATHER.

THEY SACRIFICED AND STRUGGLED AND WATCHED AS THEIR KIDS GREW AND SUCCEEDED AND BUILT A BETTER LIFE. I'M A PRODUCT OF THAT KIND OF FAMILY.

I'M PROUD OF WHERE I AM, AND I'M PROUD OF WHERE I CAME FROM. IT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT ME. IT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT MY PARENTS.

AND MOST OF ALL, IT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT THE KIND OF COUNTRY THIS IS.

THE VALUES THAT ARE SO STRONG IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS AROUND FRANKLIN AVENUE -- BELIEF IN HARD WORK AND OPPORTUNITY, LOVE OF COUNTRY AND THE HOPE FOR A BETTER FUTURE -- ARE SHARED BY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ALL ACROSS THIS COUNTRY.

WHAT BRINGS US TOGETHER AS AMERICANS IS THE DREAM OF MAKING A MORE SECURE FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN.

THAT'S WHAT WE'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN, AND IT'S WHAT WE BELIEVE IN TODAY. THAT WE SHOULD LEAVE THIS WORLD A LITTLE BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT.

THAT MEANS NOT LEAVING OUR KIDS A MOUNTAIN OF DEBT.

IT MEANS PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT -- THEY DESERVE AN EARTH AS WHOLE AND GREEN AND FULL OF LIFE AS THE ONE WE FOUND.

AND IT MEANS STOPPING THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE -- IF WE KEEP BUILDING THE STOCKPILE, IT'LL JUST GET HARDER TO TEAR IT DOWN.

OUR PARENTS MAY NOT HAVE GIVEN US THE ANSWERS TO THESE PROBLEMS, BUT THEY DID GIVE US THE TOOLS WE NEED TO SOLVE THEM.

IT STARTS WITH THE IDEA OF FAMILY. WE HONOR THE SACRIFICE OUR PARENTS HAVE MADE FOR US BY THE SACRIFICES WE MAKE FOR OUR CHILDREN.

IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE DEPEND ON EACH OTHER, TO HELP EACH OTHER. THAT SPIRIT OF SHARED INTERESTS, OF MUTUAL CONCERN AND CARING, WAS SOMETHING ELSE OUR PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS BROUGHT WITH THEM. AND WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN.

TODAY, IN THIS FAST-MOVING WORLD, THE RULES ARE THE SAME. OUR CHILDREN MAY LIVE IN THE SUBURBS, OR EVEN IN DIFFERENT CITIES, INSTEAD OF UPSTAIRS IN THE SAME HOUSE OR DOWN THE BLOCK. BUT WE FEEL JUST AS CLOSE, AND WE CARE JUST AS MUCH FOR THEIR FUTURE.

OUR NEIGHBORHOODS NO LONGER MARK THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR WORLD. WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE STILL MUST DEPEND ON OTHERS, JUST AS WE ALWAYS HAVE. BUT NOW THE OTHERS ARE NOT NECESSARILY PEOPLE WE SEE EVERY WEEK AT THE DELI COUNTER OR THE LOCAL BANK. THEY ARE FROM ALL PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY, AND ALL OVER THE WORLD.

WHAT WE ALL WANT FOR OUR CHILDREN IN THIS NEW LAND IS THE SAME THING OUR PARENTS WANTED FOR US WHEN THEY CAME FROM THE OLD LAND. THIS FESTIVAL IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER AND REMEMBER HOW MUCH WE REALLY SHARE A COMMON HERITAGE. LET'S ALSO REMEMBER THAT WE SHARE A COMMON DESTINY. TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT AS BRIGHT AND PROMISING AS WE WANT. THAT'S WHAT THIS COUNTRY IS ABOUT, AND THAT'S WHAT THE CHOICE WE HAVE THIS YEAR IS ABOUT. ~~425~~

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I'M REALLY DELIGHTED I HAD THE CHANCE TO BE HERE WITH
YOU TODAY. THANKS AGAIN. CIAO.