

Good Afternoon Mister Chair and the Representatives of Local Government. My name is Dr. Rita DeFrage current President of the Columbus Day Parade Committee and member of several Italian organizations here in Denver. I thank you for the opportunity to present to you today.

The accomplishments of Columbus deserve celebration. Angelo Nocce thought so, petitioned the Colorado legislature and in 1907 Colorado did celebrate Columbus with the "whole" of the US following in 1937 with a federal holiday and still want the freedoms to celebrate today. Unfortunately, no one seems to point out the diligence and research that went into validating these declarations and subsequent celebrations.

The facts are these: Columbus was a man ahead of his time. Columbus was a fearless explorer/navigator. Del Las Casas interprets Columbus words from his journals, with some of the statements being taken out of context. Scholars like Delaney and Powell believe that Columbus is unfairly maligned for action taken and for the actions of those who sailed with him and who came later. And the bottom line is we do not have time today to read every line of the 1000s of pages of journals and interpretations, and unfortunately HB 1327 uses only tiny excerpts of these pages to tell a much larger story. What we hear in the news and what we read in print or online in many of the recent articles is about this "fake history" being used to support a request to remove the holiday from the Colorado Calendar. Finally, the "fake history" and propaganda impacts not only the Italians but continues to denigrate those of Spanish or Hispanic descent through negative statements as well as providing visuals of violence and sexual misconduct when reading the excerpts.

It would be like me – using a recent quote from Rep Salazar written by the Catholic News Agency yesterday, "We actually never really wanted a day", he states, "this isn't what this is about" – without finding out what "it" was really all about.

The bottom line is that no one would disagree that we need to celebrate Native Americans or Italians or Spanish with the wonderful things all these cultures brought and continue to bring to Colorado and the US. In fact, we heard this stated last week from our members of the State Veterans and Military Affairs Committee. So we need to ask ourselves why we here today, because we were not on any of those ships that sailed, nor did "we" experience, first-hand, what happened in the late 1400s/1500s. We are reliant upon the "writings" of history and thus faced with interpretations.

As such, I would urge each of you to oppose HB 1327. Here in Colorado we do not have time to seek our own versions of the truth, we need to focus on the real issues in these last days of the legislative session – roadways that are in need of repair, funding for our schools, and needs of our healthcare system. Thank you.