

Legislation Text

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Designating the week of Sunday, October 8 through Saturday, October 14, 2023 as “Italian American Heritage Week” in the City of Philadelphia and honoring Gaetano (Guy) Pigliacelli and Gerald “Jerry” Blavat (posthumously) as the Grand Marshalls of the 2023 Philadelphia Italian American Parade.

WHEREAS, The annual Philadelphia Italian American Parade began in South Philadelphia in 1957 and has since become one of the City’s premier ethnic celebrations. On October 8, 2023, the 1492 Society will host the annual parade. In addition to the active participation of the Delaware Valley’s Italian American community, the Philadelphia Italian American Parade tradition includes the world-famous Philadelphia Mummers string bands, outstanding high school and many other marching groups representing the various ethnic traditions of our great City. The Parade seeks to foster a spirit of multi-culturalism and respect for people of all ethnic backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, This year our Grand Marshall Gaetano (Guy) Pigliacelli, a proud lifelong Philadelphian and union carpenter. Guy started his career with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America in 1969 as an apprentice. Guy would work his way up through the union becoming a journeyman, foreman and eventually superintendent. Throughout his 54-year career, Guy worked on many high-profile construction projects in the city. Guy was elected as Business Agent of Local 1050 in 1987. Later in his career, Guy was appointed as the Political Director of the Metropolitan Regional Council of Carpenters. Guy held both of these positions until his retirement in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Guy is a proud resident of South Philadelphia where he lives with his wife Denise and enjoys spending time with his three children and four grandchildren. For over 50 years, Guy has been a strong advocate for fair wages and benefits and a better way of life for Union Carpenters and their families; and

WHEREAS, We also honor Gerald “Jerry” Blavat (posthumously), known as "The Geator with the Heater" and "The Boss with the Hot Sauce", a true Philadelphia icon widely known as one of the early rock-and-roll DJs who revolutionized the profession and developed the "oldies" format as our co Grand Marshall of this year’s parade. for the lifelong joy and entertainment that he brought to generations of Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, When he was just 16 years old, Jerry went on the road for the first time as tour manager of Philadelphia doo-wop group Danny And The Juniors a year ahead of their breakout hit “At The Hop.”, he also branded his radio program as “The Discophonic Scene” which eventually became a Bandstand-esque television program on WFIL in Philadelphia from 1965 to 1967. The show helped break the careers of The Four Seasons, The Isley Brothers, and many more; and

WHEREAS, Many radio stations played white artists covering songs by Black artists, Blavat played the originals and supported artists like Dionne Warwick and Aretha Franklin early in their careers. Blavat’s tireless promotion of pioneering Black artists of the 1950s and 1960s shaped the pop music culture of the City. Because of this, Jerry Blavat will always hold a special place in the hearts of all Philadelphian’s; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the annual Italian American Parade, festivities will include an Italian Festival

showcasing the culture and cuisine of the people of Italy. The Italian Festival will take place at Marconi Plaza the day of the Parade and includes food, dance and music from the many diverse regions of Italy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby designate the week of October 8 through October 14, 2023 as “Italian American Heritage Week” and honor Gaetano (Guy) Pigliacelli as Grand Marshall of the 2023 Italian American Day Parade.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Grand Marshall Gaetano (Guy) Pigliacelli, further evidencing the sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.