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# PRO: Columbus Day meaningful to Italian- Americans

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For Americans of Italian heritage, there is no doubt Christopher Columbus should be honored with a national holiday.

"As the biggest and oldest national organization for people of Italian heritage, the [Sons of Italy in America](#) strongly supports celebrating the federal holiday of Columbus Day for several reasons," said Dona De Sanctis, director of communications for the organization.

"First, the day commemorates the remarkable achievement of a skilled 15th-century Italian sea captain whose voyages opened permanent communication between Europe and the Americas," she said.

"Second, Columbus Day is the only holiday that recognizes the contributions, achievements and sacrifices of this nation's estimated 26 million men and women of Italian descent, the fifth largest ethnic group, according to the U.S. Census Bureau."

San Francisco claims the nation's oldest continuously existing celebration, with the Italian-American community's annual Columbus Day parade that started in 1868, while New York City boasts the largest, according to the [Columbus Citizens Foundation](#).

Historian Bill Foster, of Cuero, also believes honoring Columbus is acceptable but emphasizes what his exploration did for bringing the world a little closer together.

"It should remind us that Native Americans were here first; that's the right thing to do, historically," Foster said. "We 'met' because of Columbus. Columbus closed the gap."

"It can be celebrated, but we need to look at it in a larger perspective - West meets East. We can all use more education on that."

De Sanctis added that Columbus' efforts should be recognized for another reason, similar to Foster's reasoning.

"Columbus matters for a third and even more important reason," she said.

"After him came millions of other Europeans who brought their art, music, science, medicine, philosophy, law and religious principles to America.

"Columbus matters because Greek democracy, Roman law, Judeo-Christian ethics and the tenet that all men are created equal are European contributions that helped create the nation we live in today."