

# California State Senate

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June 26, 2020

Ken Cooley, Chair  
Joint Committee on Rules  
State Capitol, Room 3016  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Assemblymember Cooley,

We are writing to you in response to recent actions taken by the California Senate and Assembly Democratic leadership in deciding to remove the marble statue of Queen Isabella and the explorer Christopher Columbus titled *Columbus' Last Appeal to Queen Isabella*. It is vital to share the historical context that would suffer a loss if the removal of the statute proceeds.

The historical reference points lent by the acknowledgment and teaching of Christopher Columbus has benefitted children for generations. The spirit of human exploration and discovery as well as the stories of our imperfect past display the full spectrum of our history. Like all of us, Christopher Columbus was born a child of this world. He was the son of a Catholic Italian wool merchant and as a teenager, worked on a merchant ship. He spent his early years working hard and building upon his passion for exploring at sea.

Our country is named after Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian explorer who determined that in 1492 Christopher Columbus actually sailed to what is now known as the Bahamas. Columbus set out to discover, explore, and colonize the continent of Asia. Instead, he landed and explored present-day Bahamas, Caribbean islands, and mainland South America.

The statue was carved from Carrara marble by Larkin Goldsmith Meade, an American who at the time was living in Italy. Prominent American banker, Darius Ogden Mills acquired the sculpture for \$30,000. Mr. Mills was a proponent of making Sacramento the state capital and was critical in the fundraising for the purchase of the original plot of land upon which the Capitol was built. Mr. Mills eventually gifted the statue to be enjoyed by Californians in the people's house.

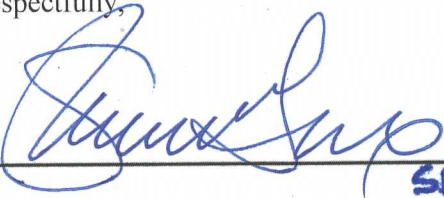
Columbus' loyalty to God and country was demonstrated through his unshakable desire to promote trade and spread the word of God around the world. Like many people of faith today, we as humans struggle, as did he. At times, when faced with decisions on how to treat others and how to love, he failed. The Catholic tenets he subscribed to, many of which 11 million Catholics in California follow today, are to love God, love your neighbor, and forgive. As misguided as Columbus may have been, history cannot be re-written, nor his accomplishments diminished.

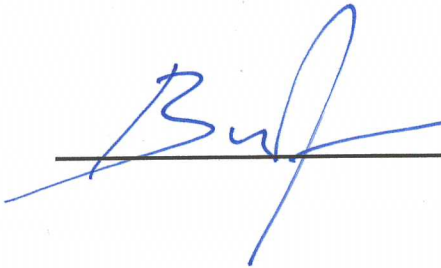
Some will say the removal of the statue is anti-Catholic. Others will say it is racist against Italian Americans. We say it is uninformed. We must not allow fear of our past to push us to ignore the lessons learned through uneducated and ignorant action by simply removing our history from sight. What will be next? Removing the Little Sisters of the Poor or Junipero Serra statues?

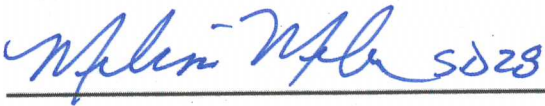
We respectfully ask that you take every action necessary to ensure that the Columbus' Last Appeal to Queen Isabella statue is not removed from the Capitol Rotunda.

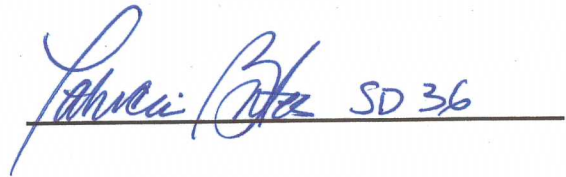
Thank you for your attention to this matter and please do not hesitate to reach out to Senator Shannon Grove at (916) 651-4016 or [Senator.Grove@sen.ca.gov](mailto:Senator.Grove@sen.ca.gov).

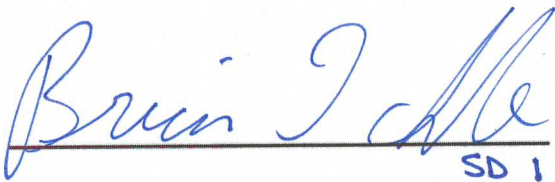
Respectfully,

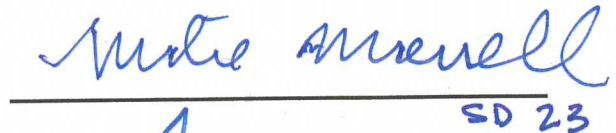
  
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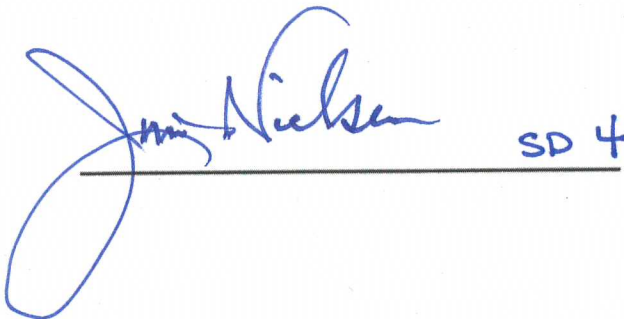
  
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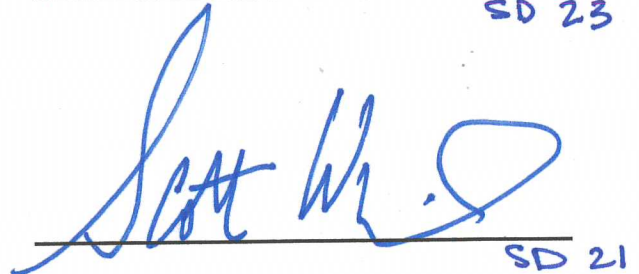
  
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