

**Message from David Thorne, U.S. Ambassador to Italy,  
To the Order of the Sons of Italy in America**



Amb. David Thorne

It is with great pleasure that I greet the Order Sons of Italy in America. The role Italian-Americans play in the bilateral relationship is so important. Civil society and diaspora communities have always been vital in strengthening links between nations. It would be hard for us at the Embassy to play our role in maintaining and advancing Italian-American relations absent your contributions in a range of fields from arts to education, politics and business.

As you know this year marks the 150th anniversary of Italian unification. It is also the 150th anniversary of the inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln, who entered office as several southern state legislatures moved further toward secession and the start of the American Civil War. At that time the American people were following General Garibaldi's campaign for unification of Italy with great interest, and some historians believe that the success of Italian unification inspired many people to support Lincoln in his bid to preserve the Union.

In 1861, New York and Boston papers even reported rumors of secret negotiations between Lincoln's Secretary of State Seward and Garibaldi inviting the general to the U.S. to support Lincoln's campaign. Although this never came to pass, Garibaldi continued to publicly support the United States government throughout the Civil War.

Against that historic backdrop emphasizing the longstanding nature of our bilateral partnership, I'd like to give you some insight into my priorities for 2011 as the American Ambassador in Rome:

First, U.S.-Italy cooperation on counterterrorism, organized crime and nuclear non-proliferation is strong, and we will work hard to maintain this relationship. Cooperation between our law enforcement agencies is one highlight of our strong bilateral partnership, and through it, we make both Americans and Italians safer. We have shared concerns about terrorism and organized crime and will continue to collaborate with our Italian colleagues to strengthen our information sharing, infrastructure security and cyber security.

Second, we will continue to work closely together on the NATO mission in Afghanistan. It would be difficult to praise too highly the intense Italian engagement in security, training and institution building in Afghanistan. Italy's contributions have been praised by President Obama himself, as well as General Petraeus and Secretaries Clinton and Gates. The Italian efforts contribute directly to eventual Allied success in seeing Afghans assume responsibility for

their own security, with our continued support. We want to ensure that the alliance remains strong as we begin the transition to greater Afghan control in 2011.

Third, we will support energy diversification. Italy is taking steps to increase its energy security, diversifying its energy supplies, particularly with more renewable and nuclear energy. U.S. companies are already helping in this regard with significant investments and operations in Italy's renewable energy sector. With Italy's experience with photovoltaics and wind power, it can also be a strong partner in green technology development. U.S. nuclear energy companies can also contribute with their advanced technology to Italy's return to nuclear energy. These are some of the important ways in which we hope to assist Italian energy diversification efforts while also supporting energy industrial partnerships to boost U.S. exports of green and nuclear technology.

Fourth, I believe that the digital economy, eCommerce and new media, can be engines of growth for both the United States and Italy. This remains an important sector for economic competitiveness and is an area where Italy lags behind the rest of Europe. The tech sector in Europe also has potential as a market for U.S. businesses. As a way to strengthen America's economic partnership with Italy, my Mission will continue to encourage Italian policy makers to embrace these new tools and open the Italian market to them.

And finally, I will promote cultural exchanges and foster people-to-people contacts. The Embassy was instrumental in the recent renewal of an agreement between Italy and the U.S. to extend the protection of Italy's ancient archaeological treasures. This helps prevent the illegal exportation of Italian artifacts to our country. Not only has this led to excellent collaboration between U.S. and Italian law enforcement, it has also improved the relationship between Italian and American cultural institutions. Our museums can expect more loans of ancient art from Italy.

Locally, as good neighbors we will continue to reach out to different communities surrounding our Embassy in Rome and our Consulates in Milan, Florence and Naples. The Embassy is working with the city of Rome to make the area around the embassy more pedestrian-friendly and attractive. I have rolled my own shirtsleeves and removed graffiti, and our staff and family members will continue to volunteer in anti-graffiti campaigns with Italians to show our appreciation for the beautiful Italian cities in which we live.

I am proud to represent President Obama and the American people to the Republic of Italy, and I salute the great work of all Italian-Americans creating such strong bonds of friendship between our two nations.