

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 29, 2001

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2001–02 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 42

Introduced by Assembly Members Reyes and Firebaugh

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Aanestad, Alquist, Aroner, Bates, Calderon, Bill Campbell, Canciamilla, Cardenas, Cardoza, Cedillo, Chan, Chavez, Cogdill, Cohn, Corbett, Correa, Cox, Daucher, Diaz, Dickerson, Dutra, Florez, Frommer, Goldberg, Harman, Havice, Hertzberg, Horton, Jackson, Keeley, Kehoe, Koretz, La Suer, Leach, Leonard, Leslie, Liu, Longville, Lowenthal, Maddox, Maldonado, Matthews, Migden, Nakano, Nation, Negrete McLeod, Oropeza, Robert Pacheco, Rod Pacheco, Papan, Pavley, Pescetti, Richman, Salinas, Shelley, Simitian, Steinberg, Strickland, Strom-Martin, Thomson, Vargas, Washington, Wayne, Wesson, Wiggins, Wright, Wyland, Wyman, and Zettel)

March 27, 2001

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 42—Relative to Cesar E. Chavez.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 42, as amended, Reyes. Cesar E. Chavez.

This measure would recognize March 31, 2001, as the anniversary of Cesar E. Chavez's birth.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, On March 31, 1927, a true hero named Cesar
- 2 Estrada Chavez was born in Yuma, Arizona to Librado and Juana

1 Chavez and became the second oldest in a family of five children.
2 Cesar E. Chavez lived his life dedicated to improving the plight of
3 farmworkers through struggle, sacrifice, and abnegation. He
4 founded and led the first successful farmworkers' union in United
5 States history. He stood for dignity and justice for farmworkers.
6 Today, he remains a symbol of hope to all Californians who find
7 hope and peace in justice; and

8 WHEREAS, During his lifetime, Cesar E. Chavez established
9 an unparalleled legacy of accomplishment as a national labor and
10 civil rights leader; and

11 WHEREAS, In the 1930's, during the Great Depression, Cesar
12 E. Chavez's father lost his small farming business and the family
13 went broke. The family became migrant workers and joined some
14 30,000 workers who followed the crops from Arizona into
15 southern California, then up the length of the Central Valley and
16 back again picking everything from peas to cotton. They lived in
17 tents and other makeshift housing that often lacked a bathroom,
18 electricity, or running water. Schooling for Chavez was irregular
19 and haphazard. He attended some 30 different schools, often
20 encountered discrimination, and was punished for speaking
21 Spanish; and

22 WHEREAS, After graduation from the eighth grade, Chavez
23 was forced to quit school and take to the fields in order to help
24 support his family. In 1944, at the age of 17, Chavez joined the
25 Navy and served in World War II. After he completed his tour of
26 duty, Chavez returned to California and married Helen Fabela, a
27 woman who shared his dedication to the cause of the farmworker.
28 They lived in San Jose in a tough Mexican neighborhood called
29 "Sal Si Puedes," which translated to "Get out if you can," and
30 together raised eight children; and

31 WHEREAS, As a farmworker, Chavez experienced firsthand
32 the injustice of working long hours with little pay. Instilled with
33 a sense of justice passed down from his mother, Chavez made a
34 decision to speak up and fight for a change. He took part in his first
35 strike in protest of low wages and poor working conditions for
36 farmworkers. Although initially unsuccessful, his participation in
37 that first strike was to mark the beginning of a long career in which
38 he fought for improved working and living conditions for
39 farmworkers; and



1 WHEREAS, In 1952, Chavez met Fred Ross, who was with a
2 group called the Community Services Organization (CSO). Struck
3 by Chavez's engaging personality and leadership qualities, Ross
4 tapped Chavez to head voter registration efforts in which he
5 successfully registered 4,000 voters. The following year, Chavez
6 led organization efforts to establish CSO offices in every major
7 barrio. He eventually spent 10 years with CSO, and became
8 general director in 1958. During this time, services were expanded
9 to include citizenship classes, helping members secure driver's
10 licenses, rendering assistance in filling out applications for aid,
11 and securing legal counsel; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1962, Chavez resigned his position with the
13 CSO to embark on a bold new undertaking to form a farmworker's
14 union. He was joined by the great Dolores Huerta, and together
15 they became the architects of the National Farm Worker's Union,
16 the forerunner of the present United Farm Workers (UFW); and

17 WHEREAS, In 1965, Chavez led a strike of California
18 grapepickers to demand higher wages, and urged all Americans to
19 boycott table grapes as a show of support. The strike included a
20 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 in which
21 thousands of farmworkers and supporters marched in solidarity.
22 The farmworkers and supporters carried banners with the black
23 eagle with HUELGA (strike) and VIVA LA CAUSA (long live our
24 cause); and

25 WHEREAS, Chavez preached nonviolence to the strikers even
26 as they were physically abused by many of those opposed to the
27 grape boycott. In 1968, Chavez began a Gandhi-like fast to call
28 attention to the migrant workers' cause. Although his dramatic act
29 did little to solve the immediate problem, it increased public
30 awareness of the conditions under which farmworkers labored. In
31 1973, the UFW organized a strike for higher wages from lettuce
32 growers and, after many battles, an agreement was finally reached
33 in 1977 that gave the UFW the sole right to organize farmworkers;
34 and

35 WHEREAS, During the 1980's, Chavez led the effort to call
36 attention to the health problems of farmworkers caused by the use
37 of certain pesticides on crops; and

38 WHEREAS, On April 23, 1993, Cesar E. Chavez died
39 peacefully in his sleep in San Luis, Arizona. During Chavez's
40 funeral, Cardinal Roger M. Mahoney, who celebrated the funeral



1 mass, called Chavez “a special prophet for the world’s farm
2 workers”; and

3 WHEREAS, Many declared that the UFW would die without
4 him, but on Chavez’s birthday, March 31, 1994, under the
5 leadership of his son-in-law Arturo Rodriquez, the UFW marched
6 343 miles from Delano to Sacramento, echoing Chavez’s historic
7 1966 march, and demonstrated that the UFW still worked for
8 farmworkers; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1990, Mexican President Salinas de Gortari
10 awarded Cesar E. Chavez, the “El Aquila Azteca” (the Aztec
11 Eagle), Mexico’s highest award, which is presented to people of
12 Mexican heritage who have made major contributions outside of
13 Mexico. He also became the second Mexican American to receive
14 the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in
15 the United States, which was presented posthumously to Helen
16 Chavez and her children on August 8, 1994, by President Clinton;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, In 1994, Chavez’s family and the officers of the
19 UFW created the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation to inspire current
20 and future generations by promoting the ideals of Cesar’s life,
21 work, and vision. Communities throughout California and the
22 United States have honored Cesar E. Chavez by naming parks,
23 children’s centers, streets, and other public works after the leader;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, Cesar E. Chavez led by example, giving of himself
26 so that he might help others. His relentless pursuit of the belief that
27 the American dream should be available to all Americans,
28 regardless of race or origin of birth, stands as a monument to our
29 free society. His life and work are not only an inspiration to
30 Latinos, but to working Americans of all nationalities. His legacy
31 lives on in the improved working and living conditions of
32 hundreds of thousands of Californians and their families; now,
33 therefore, be it

34 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
35 *thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes March 31,*
36 *2001, as the anniversary of the birth of Cesar E. Chavez, and calls*
37 *upon all Californians to participate in appropriate observances to*
38 *remember Cesar E. Chavez as a symbol of hope and justice for all*
39 *citizens; and be it further*



- 1 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
- 2 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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