

AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 29, 2006

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 23, 2006

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2005–06 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 115

Introduced by Assembly Member Coto

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Arambula, Baca, Berg, Bermudez, Calderon, Canciamilla, Chan, Chavez, Chu, Cohn, Daucher, De La Torre, Dymally, Evans, Frommer, Goldberg, Jerome Horton, Shirley Horton, Karnette, Klehs, Laird, Leno, Leslie, Lieber, Lieu, Montanez, Mullin, Nakanishi, Nation, Nava, Negrete McLeod, Nunez, Oropeza, Parra, Pavley, Plescia, Ridley-Thomas, Ruskin, Saldana, Salinas, Spitzer, Torrico, Umberg, Vargas, Wolk, and Yee)

(Coauthor: Senator Escutia)

(Coauthors: Senators Alarcon, Cedillo, Ducheny, Escutia, Figueroa, Florez, Ortiz, Romero, and Soto)

February 9, 2006

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 115—Relative to César Chávez Day.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 115, as amended, Coto. César Chávez Day.

This measure would recognize March 31, 2006, as the anniversary of the birth of César Chávez, and would call upon all Californians to participate in appropriate observances to remember César Chávez as a symbol of hope and justice to all persons.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, On March 31, 1927, a true hero named César
2 Estrada Chávez was born in Yuma, Arizona, to Librado and
3 Juana Chávez and became the second oldest in a family of five
4 children. César Chávez lived his life dedicated to improving the
5 plight of farmworkers through struggle, sacrifice, and self-denial.
6 He founded and led the first successful farmworkers' union in
7 United States history. He stood for dignity and justice for
8 farmworkers. Today, he remains a symbol of hope to all
9 Californians who find hope and peace in justice; and

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

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

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

39 ~~WHEREAS, In 1952, César Chávez met Fred Ross who was~~
40 ~~with a group called the Community Services Organization~~

1 (~~CSO~~). ~~Struck by César Chávez’ engaging personality and~~
2 ~~leadership qualities, Ross tapped César Chávez to head voter~~
3 ~~registration efforts where he successfully registered 4,000 voters.~~
4 ~~The following year, he led organizational efforts to establish~~
5 ~~CSO offices in every major barrio. César Chávez eventually~~
6 ~~spent 10 years with the CSO, and became general director in~~
7 ~~1958. During this time, services were expanded to include~~
8 ~~citizenship classes, helping members secure driver’s licenses,~~
9 ~~assistance in filling out applications for aid, and securing legal~~
10 ~~counsel; and~~

11 WHEREAS, In 1962, César Chávez resigned his position with
12 the ~~CSO~~ *Community Services Organization* to embark on a bold
13 new undertaking to form a farmworkers’ union. He was joined by
14 the great Dolores Huerta, and together they became the architects
15 of the National Farm Worker’s Union, the forerunner to the
16 present United Farm Workers (UFW); and

17 WHEREAS, In 1965, César Chávez led a strike of California
18 grapepickers to demand higher wages, and urged all Americans
19 to boycott table grapes as a show of support. The strike included
20 a 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 the words “HUELGA” (strike) and “VIVA LA
24 CAUSA” (long live our cause); and

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

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

38 WHEREAS, On April 23, 1993, César Estrada Chávez died
39 peacefully in his sleep in San Luis, Arizona. During his funeral,
40 Cardinal Roger M. Mahoney, who celebrated the funeral mass,

1 called César Chávez “a special prophet for the world’s
2 farmworkers”; and

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

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

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

25 WHEREAS, César Chávez led by example, giving of himself
26 so that he might help others. His relentless pursuit of the belief
27 that the American dream should be available to all Americans,
28 regardless of race or national origin, stands as a monument to our
29 free society. His life and work is 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; and

33 WHEREAS, In the year 2000, the Legislature enacted Senate
34 Bill 984 (Chapter 213 of the Statutes of 2000) to create an annual
35 state holiday on César Chávez’ birthday, March 31. This holiday
36 provides all Californians the opportunity to learn from César
37 Chávez’ life and provides schoolchildren the opportunity to learn
38 through community service; and

39 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education on Wednesday,
40 February 6, 2002, adopted a model curriculum on the life and

1 work of César Chávez, fulfilling a key provision of Chapter 213
2 of the Statutes of 2000, that also includes topics on pesticides,
3 immigration, and agriculture's role in the economy; now,
4 therefore, be it

5 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
6 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature recognizes March 31,
7 2006, as the anniversary of the birth of César Chávez, and calls
8 upon all Californians to participate in appropriate observances to
9 remember César Chávez as a symbol of hope and justice to all
10 persons; and be it further

11 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit
12 copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.