

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 16

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 123

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 16—Relative to McDonnell Hall.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 28, 2011.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 16, Campos. McDonnell Hall: historic landmark.

This resolution would memorialize the National Park Service to declare McDonnell Hall a national historic landmark. This resolution would also urge the City of San Jose to similarly designate McDonnell Hall as a historic landmark.

WHEREAS, McDonnell Hall played an integral role in the life of Cesar Chavez during his time in San Jose; and

WHEREAS, McDonnell Hall was originally established by Father Don McDonnell in the Sal Si Puedes barrio of San Jose as a parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe; and

WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez was one of the first people to attend the newly established parish. Father McDonnell became a great friend and mentor to Cesar Chavez. Father McDonnell's ideas about applying basic Catholic doctrine to help migrant workers and others suffering from social injustice inspired Cesar Chavez; and

WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez later said of this experience that “[M]y education started when I met Father Donald McDonnell, who came to ‘Sal Si Puedes’ because there was no Catholic Church there, no priest, and hundreds of Mexican-Americans. We were some of the first members that joined his congregation for masses in a little Puerto Rican hall that was just a broken-down shack. ... We became great friends when I began to help him ... recite mass in the bracero camps and in the county jail. We had long talks about farm workers. I knew a lot about the work, but I didn't know anything about the economics, and I learned quite a bit from him. He had a picture of a worker's shanty and a picture of a grower's mansion. Everything he said was aimed always to solve injustice”; and

WHEREAS, Father McDonnell also introduced Cesar Chavez to Fred Ross. Fred Ross taught Cesar Chavez the principles of organizing in general, and in particular on organizing based in the local Catholic church; and

WHEREAS, It is strongly believed that Cesar Chavez started “La Causa” in this eastside neighborhood of San Jose, which was referred to by the residents as “Sal Si Puedes” or “Get Out If You Can”; and

WHEREAS, Dolores Huerta, cofounder of the United Farm Workers, has stated: “The farm worker movement started in San Jose”; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, Congress directed the United States Department of Interior to conduct a special resource study of sites in California and Arizona that are significant to Cesar Chavez and the farm labor movement, and to determine if any of those sites should be declared a national historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, The National Park Service is currently conducting that study and is expected to reach a decision in November 2011; and

WHEREAS, The City of San Jose's planning department is currently reviewing a proposal to designate McDonnell Hall as a historic landmark; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature memorializes the National Park Service to declare McDonnell Hall a national historic landmark for its importance to the life of Cesar Chavez; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the City of San Jose to designate McDonnell Hall as a historic landmark and to include McDonnell Hall in the current Cesar E. Chavez Historical Walkway; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature recognizes the importance of McDonnell Hall to the farmworker movement in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the National Park Service and to the author for appropriate distribution.