

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 1, 2013

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

**Assembly Concurrent Resolution**

**No. 27**

**Introduced by Assembly Member V. Manuel Pérez**

*(Coauthors: Assembly Members Achadjian, Alejo, Allen, Ammiano, Atkins, Bigelow, Bloom, Blumenfeld, Bocanegra, Bonilla, Bonta, Bradford, Brown, Buchanan, Ian Calderon, Campos, Chau, Chávez, Chesbro, Cooley, Dahle, Daly, Dickinson, Eggman, Fong, Fox, Frazier, Beth Gaines, Garcia, Gatto, Gordon, Gray, Hall, Roger Hernández, Holden, Jones-Sawyer, Levine, Linder, Logue, Maienschein, Medina, Mitchell, Morrell, Mullin, Muratsuchi, Nazarian, Nestande, Olsen, Pan, Patterson, Perea, John A. Pérez, Quirk, Quirk-Silva, Rendon, Salas, Skinner, Stone, Ting, Torres, Wagner, Waldron, Weber, Wieckowski, Wilk, Williams, and Yamada)*

(Principal coauthor: Senator Lara)

February 27, 2013

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 27—Relative to César Chávez.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 27, as amended, V. Manuel Pérez. César Chávez.

This measure would call upon all Californians to observe César Chávez's birthday, March 31, as a day of public service, to recognize the hard work and self-sacrifice that farmworkers go through to feed all the families in our state, and to learn from César Chávez's life and his mission of nonviolence, social justice, and selfless service to others.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, César Estrada Chávez recognized that for many  
2 people, spanning many generations and many ethnicities, the path  
3 to a better life frequently begins in the fields. For many  
4 farmworkers, the American Dream means a life of self-sacrifice,  
5 hard work, and perseverance; and

6 WHEREAS, César Chávez experienced the hardships and  
7 injustices of farmworker life firsthand. He was born on March 31,  
8 1927, in the North Gila River Valley in Arizona, on the small  
9 family farm his grandfather homesteaded. César Chávez’s father  
10 lost the farm during the Great Depression, forcing the family to  
11 join some 30,000 farmworkers who followed the crops throughout  
12 California and lived in tents and makeshift housing that often  
13 lacked a bathroom, electricity, or running water; and

14 WHEREAS, César Chávez understood the value of education  
15 as a path to a better life because he quit school after completing  
16 the 8th grade to work full time, helping to support his family in  
17 the fields. Later in life, César Chávez became self-educated through  
18 his passion for reading; and

19 WHEREAS, Although later a pacifist, in 1946, César Chávez  
20 enrolled and served his country in the United States Navy. He was  
21 honorably discharged whereupon he married Helen Fabela and  
22 eventually settled in the East San Jose barrio nicknamed “Sal Si  
23 Puedes” (“Get Out if You Can”) to raise a family that eventually  
24 numbered eight children; and

25 WHEREAS, In San Jose, César Chávez was introduced to the  
26 social teachings of the Catholic Church and trained in community  
27 organizing strategies and tactics. César Chávez and Fred Ross, an  
28 organizer for the Community Service Organization (CSO),  
29 established CSO chapters across California and Arizona during  
30 the 1950s, helping Latinos register to vote, pushing for basic public  
31 services and infrastructure in the barrios, peacefully battling police  
32 brutality and racial discrimination, and creating the most effective  
33 Latino civil rights group of its era; and

34 WHEREAS, In 1962, after failing to convince the CSO to let  
35 him organize farmworkers, César Chávez resigned from the only  
36 decent paying job he ever held and moved his wife and eight  
37 children to Delano, California. There, with \$1,200 in life savings  
38 that was soon gone, César Chávez, his family, and close friends  
39 began building the National Farm Workers Association, which  
40 later became the United Farm Workers of America (UFW); and

1 WHEREAS, In 1965, in a partnership with a union of Filipino  
2 American farmworkers, César Chávez organized a major strike  
3 against grape growers in California. The following year César  
4 Chávez led an unprecedented 340-mile march, from Delano to  
5 Sacramento, that placed the farmworkers' plight before the  
6 conscience of the American people. Supporters carried slogans  
7 with the words "HUELGA" (strike) and "VIVA LA CAUSA"  
8 (long live our cause), advocating for improved compensation and  
9 labor conditions. Later efforts resulted in the enactment of  
10 California's historic Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the  
11 first and still the only law in the nation to "encourage and protect"  
12 the right of farmworkers to organize and bargain with their  
13 employers; and

14 WHEREAS, Through countless strikes, boycotts, marches, and  
15 fasts that produced many victories and some defeats, César Chávez,  
16 who even considered vegetarianism an integral part of living  
17 nonviolently, never stopped his peaceful battles on behalf of the  
18 farmworkers with whom he shared his life. His dedication to his  
19 work earned him the respect of some of our greatest political and  
20 civil rights leaders, including Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King  
21 Jr., and Jesse Jackson. César Chávez's motto in life, "Sí Se Puede!"  
22 or "Yes We Can!" has served as an inspiration not only for Latinos,  
23 but for working Americans of all walks for life; and

24 WHEREAS, In 1993, César Chávez died peacefully in his sleep  
25 in San Luis, Arizona. Forty thousand people marched behind his  
26 plain pine casket during funeral services in Delano to honor a man  
27 who never made more than \$5,000 a year, never owned a home,  
28 and left no money behind for his family. They came to affirm César  
29 Chávez's words from his landmark 1984 address to the  
30 Commonwealth Club in San Francisco: "Once social change  
31 begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person  
32 who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who  
33 feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid  
34 anymore"; and

35 WHEREAS, Although César Chávez was uncomfortable with  
36 personal recognition in life, since his passing Chávez has been  
37 honored in hundreds of communities. César Chávez was awarded  
38 "El Aguila Azteca" (the Aztec Eagle), Mexico's highest award  
39 presented to people of Mexican heritage. In 1994, President Bill  
40 Clinton posthumously presented César Chávez with America's

1 highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2006,  
2 California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger inducted César  
3 Chávez into the first class of the California Hall of Fame. In 2011,  
4 the United States Navy announced naming the latest Lewis and  
5 Clark-class cargo ship being built in San Diego the USNS César  
6 Chávez; and

7 WHEREAS, Since César Chávez's passing, the UFW has  
8 continued his work through organizing farmworkers and campaigns  
9 to enact laws and regulations to bring dignity and protections to  
10 farmworkers. Meanwhile, the César Chávez Foundation continues  
11 improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of farmworkers and  
12 other low-wage working families through 30 high-quality  
13 affordable housing communities it has built or renovated and  
14 manages in four states, a network of nine popular educational  
15 Spanish-language radio stations in three states, after school tutoring  
16 for disadvantaged students in two states, and the National Chávez  
17 Center, including a visitor center, memorial gardens, and  
18 educational center on 187 acres in the Tehachapi Mountains where  
19 César Chávez lived and worked, and is buried; and

20 WHEREAS, César Chávez successfully increased public  
21 awareness of farmworker working conditions. To many  
22 Californians the farmworkers' struggles are an issue from the past,  
23 a belief reflected by the fact that farmworker suffering typically  
24 takes place in remote areas far from cities, thereby rendering  
25 farmworkers invisible to our society. The fruits and vegetables  
26 that we enjoy in our daily lives are produced by farmworkers who  
27 often endure long hours of backbreaking work and still face  
28 challenges such as inadequate enforcement of pesticide, safety,  
29 and labor protection laws in the fields; and

30 WHEREAS, Farmworkers still dream of providing a better life  
31 for their children, but the reality of having to move from crop to  
32 crop makes this dream hard to achieve. The downturn in today's  
33 economy and rising cost of living have pushed farmworkers further  
34 into poverty; and

35 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Legislature passed and Governor Gray  
36 Davis signed into law Senate Bill No. 984 (Chapter 213 of the  
37 Statutes of 2000), to create the first annual state holiday in the  
38 country on César Chávez's birthday, March 31. Under that law,  
39 the State Board of Education also created a statewide curriculum  
40 on Chávez and encourages schools across the state to engage

1 teachers and students in service learning projects as a way of  
2 honoring the legendary farm labor and civil rights leader; now,  
3 therefore, be it

4 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*  
5 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature calls upon all Californians  
6 to observe César Chávez's birthday, March 31, as a day of public  
7 service; and be it further

8 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls upon all Californians to  
9 recognize the hard work and self-sacrifice that farmworkers go  
10 through to feed all the families in our state; and be it further

11 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls upon all Californians to  
12 learn from César Chávez's life and his mission of nonviolence,  
13 social justice, and selfless service to others; and be it further

14 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
15 of this resolution to the Chávez family, particularly César Chávez's  
16 widow, Helen Chávez, the United Farm Workers of America, the  
17 César Chávez Foundation, and the author for appropriate  
18 distribution.