

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 30, 2014

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 28, 2014

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

**Assembly Concurrent Resolution**

**No. 114**

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**Introduced by Assembly Members Campos and Alejo**

**(Coauthors: Assembly Members Achadjian, Allen, Ammiano, Atkins, Bloom, Bocanegra, Bonilla, Bonta, Bradford, Brown, Buchanan, Ian Calderon, Chau, Chávez, Chesbro, Cooley, Dababneh, Daly, Dickinson, Eggman, Fong, Fox, Frazier, Gatto, Gomez, Gonzalez, Gordon, Gorell, Gray, Grove, Hall, Holden, Levine, Linder, Lowenthal, Maienschein, Melendez, Mullin, Muratsuchi, Nazarian, Nestande, Olsen, Pan, Perea, John A. Pérez, V. Manuel Pérez, Quirk, Quirk-Silva, Rendon, Ridley-Thomas, Rodriguez, Salas, Skinner, Stone, Ting, Wagner, Waldron, Weber, Wieckowski, Wilk, and Williams)**

February 25, 2014

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 114—Relative to César Chávez.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 114, as amended, Campos. 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 is one of the most significant  
2 civil rights leaders in the history of our nation. César Chávez  
3 recognized that the dignity of a society can be measured by the  
4 dignity by which the people who help feed our nation are treated;  
5 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 Yuma~~, Arizona, on the  
9 small family farm his grandfather homesteaded. César Chávez's  
10 father lost the farm during the Great Depression, forcing the family  
11 to join some 30,000 farmworkers who followed the crops  
12 throughout California and lived in tents and makeshift housing  
13 that often 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 left 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 peaceful  
27 community organizing strategies at McDonnell Hall, historically  
28 known as Guadalupe Mission Chapel. César Chávez and Fred  
29 Ross, an organizer for the Community Service Organization (CSO),  
30 established CSO chapters across California and Arizona during  
31 the 1950s, helping Latinos register to vote, pushing for basic public  
32 services and infrastructure in the barrios, peacefully battling police  
33 brutality and racial discrimination, and creating the most effective  
34 Latino civil rights group of its era; and

35 WHEREAS, In 1962, after failing to convince the CSO to let  
36 him organize farmworkers, César Chávez resigned from the only  
37 decent paying job he ever held and moved his wife and eight  
38 children to Delano, California. There, with \$1,200 in life savings  
39 that was soon gone, César Chávez, his family, and close friends

1 began building the National Farm Workers Association, which  
2 later became the United Farm Workers of America (UFW); and

3 WHEREAS, In 1965, in a partnership with a union of Filipino  
4 American farmworkers, César Chávez organized a major strike  
5 against grape growers in California. The following year, in 1966,  
6 César Chávez led an unprecedented 340-mile march, from Delano  
7 to Sacramento, that placed the farmworkers' plight before the  
8 conscience of the American people. Supporters carried slogans  
9 with the words "HUELGA" (strike) and "VIVA LA CAUSA"  
10 (long live our cause), advocating for improved compensation and  
11 labor conditions. Later efforts, including a 25-day fast by César  
12 Chávez, resulted in the enactment of California's historic  
13 Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the first and still the  
14 only law in the nation to "encourage and protect" the right of  
15 farmworkers to organize and bargain with their employers; and

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

26 WHEREAS, In 1993, César Chávez died peacefully in his sleep  
27 in San Luis, Arizona. During funeral services in Delano, 40,000  
28 people marched in procession behind his plain pine casket. They  
29 came to affirm César Chávez's words from his landmark 1984  
30 address to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco: "Once social  
31 change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the  
32 person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person  
33 who 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, In 2012, in recognition of the impact of César  
8 Chávez to our nation's and state's history, President Barack Obama  
9 established the César E. Chávez National Monument at Nuestra  
10 Senora Reina de la Paz in Keene, California and concurrently  
11 designated La Paz as a National Historical Landmark. In 2013, La  
12 Paz, which is César Chávez's final resting ground, McDonnell  
13 Hall, located in San Jose, California, the former site of the UFW  
14 headquarters, known as the Forty Acres, the Filipino Community  
15 Hall in Delano, California, and the 1966 march route from Delano  
16 to Sacramento were four of five sites, out of 100, found to be  
17 nationally significant for a National Historic Park honoring César  
18 Chávez. In 2013, McDonnell Hall (formerly Guadalupe Mission  
19 Chapel) was designated a State Historical Landmark for its close  
20 association with the life and work of César Chávez; and

21 WHEREAS, Since César Chávez's passing, the UFW has  
22 continued his work through organizing farmworkers and campaigns  
23 to enact laws and regulations to bring dignity and protections to  
24 farmworkers. Meanwhile, the César Chávez Foundation continues  
25 improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of farmworkers and  
26 other low-wage working families through 30 high-quality  
27 affordable housing communities it has built or renovated and  
28 manages in four states, a network of nine popular educational  
29 Spanish-language radio stations in three states, after-school tutoring  
30 for disadvantaged students in two states, and the National Chávez  
31 Center, including a visitor center, memorial gardens, and  
32 educational center on 187 acres in the Tehachapi Mountains where  
33 César Chávez lived and worked, and is buried; and

34 WHEREAS, César Chávez successfully increased public  
35 awareness of farmworker working conditions. To many  
36 Californians the farmworkers' struggles are an issue from the past,  
37 a belief reflected by the fact that farmworker suffering typically  
38 takes place in remote areas far from cities, thereby rendering  
39 farmworkers invisible to our society. The fruits and vegetables  
40 that we enjoy in our daily lives are produced by farmworkers who

1 often endure long hours of backbreaking work and still face  
2 challenges such as inadequate enforcement of pesticide, safety,  
3 and labor protection laws in the fields; and

4 WHEREAS, Farmworkers still dream of providing a better life  
5 for their children, but the reality of having to move from crop to  
6 crop makes this dream hard to achieve. Economic forces and the  
7 rising cost of living have pushed farmworkers further into poverty;  
8 and

9 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Legislature passed and Governor Gray  
10 Davis signed into law Senate Bill 984 (Chapter 213 of the Statutes  
11 of 2000), to create the first annual state holiday in the country on  
12 César Chávez's birthday, March 31, in recognition of César Chávez  
13 as the most important Latino leader in the United States during  
14 the 20th century. Under that law, the State Board of Education  
15 also created a statewide curriculum on César Chávez and  
16 encourages schools across the state to engage teachers and students  
17 in service learning projects as a way of honoring the legendary  
18 farm labor and civil rights leader; now, therefore, be it

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

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

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

29 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
30 of this resolution to the Chávez family, particularly César Chávez's  
31 widow, Helen Chávez, the United Farm Workers of America, the  
32 César Chávez Foundation, and the author for appropriate  
33 distribution.

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