

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY FEBRUARY 26, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 3

Introduced by Assembly Member Mendoza

December 1, 2008

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 3—Relative to César Chávez Day.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 3, as amended, Mendoza. César Chávez Day.

This measure would recognize March 31, ~~2010~~ 2009, 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 Juana
3 Chávez. He was second oldest in a family of five children. César
4 Chávez lived his life dedicated to improving the plight of
5 farmworkers through struggle, sacrifice, and self-denial. He
6 established 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 went
12 broke. The family became migrant workers and joined some 30,000
13 workers who followed the crops from Arizona into Southern

1 California, then up the length of the Central Valley and back again,
2 picking everything from peas to cotton. They lived in tents and
3 other makeshift housing that often lacked a bathroom, electricity,
4 or running water. Schooling for Chávez was irregular and
5 haphazard. He attended some 30 different schools, often
6 encountered discrimination, and was punished for speaking
7 Spanish; and

8 WHEREAS, After graduation from the 8th grade, César Chávez
9 was forced to quit school and take to the fields in order to help
10 support his family. In 1944, at the age of 17, César Chávez joined
11 the Navy and served in World War II. After he completed his tour
12 of duty, César Chávez returned to California and married Helen
13 Fabela, a woman who shared his dedication to the cause of the
14 farmworker. They lived in San Jose in a tough Mexican
15 neighborhood called “Sal Si Puedes” which translates to “get out
16 if you can,” and together raised eight children; and

17 WHEREAS, As a farmworker, César Chávez experienced
18 firsthand the injustice of working long hours with little pay.
19 Instilled with a sense of justice passed down from his mother,
20 César Chávez made a decision to speak up and fight for change.
21 He took part in his first strike in protest of low wages and poor
22 working conditions for farmworkers. Although initially
23 unsuccessful, his participation in that first strike was to mark the
24 beginning of a long career in which he fought for improved
25 working and living conditions for farmworkers; and

26 WHEREAS, In 1962, César Chávez resigned his position with
27 the Community Services Organization to embark on a bold new
28 undertaking to form a farmworkers’ union. He was joined by the
29 great Dolores Huerta, and together they became the architects of
30 the National Farm Worker’s Union, the forerunner to the present
31 United Farm Workers (UFW); and

32 WHEREAS, In 1965, César Chávez led a strike of California
33 grape pickers to demand higher wages and urged all Americans
34 to boycott table grapes as a show of support. The strike included
35 a 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 in which
36 thousands of farmworkers and supporters marched in solidarity.
37 The farmworkers and supporters carried banners with the black
38 eagle with the words “HUELGA” (strike) and “VIVA LA CAUSA”
39 (long live our cause); and

1 WHEREAS, César Chávez preached nonviolence to the strikers
2 even as they were physically abused by many of those opposed to
3 the grape boycott. In 1968, he began a Ghandi-like fast to call
4 attention to the migrant workers' cause. Although his dramatic act
5 did little to solve the immediate problem, it increased public
6 awareness of the conditions under which farmworkers labored. In
7 1973, the UFW organized a strike for higher wages from lettuce
8 growers, and, after many battles, an agreement was finally reached
9 in 1977 that gave the UFW the sole right to organize farmworkers;
10 and

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

14 WHEREAS, On April 23, 1993, César Estrada Chávez died
15 peacefully in his sleep in San Luis, Arizona. During his funeral,
16 Cardinal Roger M. Mahony, who celebrated the funeral mass,
17 called César Chávez "a special prophet for the world's
18 farmworkers"; and

19 WHEREAS, Many declared that the UFW would die without
20 him, but on César Chávez' birthday, March 31, 1994, under the
21 leadership of his son-in-law, Arturo Rodríguez, the UFW marched
22 343 miles from Delano to Sacramento, echoing César Chávez'
23 historic 1966 march, and demonstrated that the UFW still worked
24 for farmworkers; and

25 WHEREAS, In 1990, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de
26 Gortari awarded César Chávez "El Aguila Azteca" (the Aztec
27 Eagle), Mexico's highest award presented to people of Mexican
28 heritage who have made major contributions outside Mexico. He
29 also became the second Mexican American to receive the
30 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the
31 United States, which was presented posthumously to his wife,
32 Helen Chávez, and their children on August 8, 1994, by President
33 William Jefferson Clinton; and

34 WHEREAS, In 1994, César Chávez' family and the officers of
35 the UFW created the César E. Chávez Foundation to inspire current
36 and future generations by promoting the ideals of César Chávez'
37 life, work, and vision. Communities throughout California and the
38 United States have honored the memory of César Chávez by
39 naming schools, parks, children's centers, streets, and other public
40 works after the great labor leader; and

1 WHEREAS, César Chávez led by example, giving of himself
2 so that he might help others. His relentless pursuit of the belief
3 that the American dream should be available to all Americans,
4 regardless of race or national origin, stands as a monument to our
5 free society. His life and work is not only an inspiration to Latinos,
6 but to working Americans of all nationalities. His legacy lives on
7 in the improved working and living conditions of hundreds of
8 thousands of Californians and their families; and

9 WHEREAS, In the year 2000, the Legislature enacted Senate
10 Bill 984 (Chapter 213 of the Statutes of 2000) to create an annual
11 state holiday on César Chávez' birthday, March 31. This holiday
12 provides all Californians the opportunity to learn from César
13 Chávez' life and provides schoolchildren the opportunity to learn
14 through community service; and

15 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education on Wednesday,
16 February 6, 2002, adopted a model curriculum on the life and work
17 of César Chávez, fulfilling a key provision of Chapter 213 of the
18 Statutes of 2000, that also includes topics on pesticides,
19 immigration, and agriculture's role in the economy; now, therefore,
20 be it

21 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
22 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature recognizes March 31,
23 ~~2010~~ 2009, as the anniversary of the birth of César Chávez, and
24 calls upon all Californians to participate in appropriate observances
25 to remember César Chávez as a symbol of hope and justice to all
26 persons; and be it further

27 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
28 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.
29
30

31 **CORRECTIONS:**

32 **Text—Page 3.**
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