

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 31, 2011

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 12

Introduced by Assembly Member Mendoza

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Achadjian, Allen, Ammiano, Atkins, Beall, Bill Berryhill, Block, Blumenfield, Bonilla, Bradford, Brownley, Buchanan, Butler, Charles Calderon, Carter, Cedillo, Chesbro, Conway, Cook, Davis, Dickinson, Donnelly, Eng, Feuer, Fletcher, Fong, Fuentes, Furutani, Galgiani, Gatto, Gordon, Hall, Harkey, Hayashi, Roger Hernández, Hill, Huber, Hueso, Huffman, Jeffries, Lara, Logue, Bonnie Lowenthal, Ma, Miller, Mitchell, Monning, Morrell, Nestande, Nielsen, Olsen, Pan, Perea, John A. Pérez, V. Manuel Pérez, Portantino, Solorio, Swanson, Torres, Valadao, Wagner, Wieckowski, Williams, and Yamada)

January 31, 2011

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 12—Relative to César Chávez Day.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 12, as amended, Mendoza. César Chávez Day.

This measure would recognize March 31, 2011, 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

1 Chávez lived his life dedicated to improving the plight of
2 farmworkers through struggle, sacrifice, and self-denial. He
3 established and led the first successful farmworkers' union in
4 United States history. He stood for dignity and justice for
5 farmworkers. Today, he remains a symbol of hope to all
6 Californians who find hope and peace in justice; and

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

18 WHEREAS, After graduation from the 8th grade, César Chávez
19 was forced to quit school and take to the fields in order to help
20 support his family. In 1944, at 17 years of age, César Chávez joined
21 the Navy and served in World War II. After he completed his tour
22 of duty, César Chávez returned to California and married Helen
23 Fabela, a woman who shared his dedication to the cause of the
24 farmworker. They lived in San Jose in a tough Mexican
25 neighborhood called "Sal Si Puedes" which translates to "get out
26 if you can," and together raised eight children; and

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

36 WHEREAS, In 1962, César Chávez resigned his position with
37 the Community Services Organization to embark on a bold new
38 undertaking to form a farmworkers' union. He was joined by the
39 great Dolores Huerta, and together they became the architects of

1 the National Farm Worker’s Union, the forerunner to the present
2 United Farm Workers (UFW); and

3 WHEREAS, In 1965, César Chávez led a strike of California
4 grapepickers to demand higher wages and urged all Americans to
5 boycott table grapes as a show of support. The strike included a
6 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966 in which
7 thousands of farmworkers and supporters marched in solidarity.
8 The farmworkers and supporters carried banners with the black
9 eagle with the words “HUELGA” (strike) and “VIVA LA CAUSA”
10 (long live our cause); and

11 WHEREAS, César Chávez preached nonviolence to the strikers
12 even as they were physically abused by many of those opposed to
13 the grape boycott. In 1968, he began a Ghandi-like fast to call
14 attention to the migrant workers’ cause. Although his dramatic act
15 did little to solve the immediate problem, it increased public
16 awareness of the conditions under which farmworkers labored. In
17 1973, the UFW organized a strike for higher wages from lettuce
18 growers, and, after many battles, an agreement was finally reached
19 in 1977 that gave the UFW the sole right to organize farmworkers;
20 and

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

24 WHEREAS, On April 23, 1993, César Estrada Chávez died
25 peacefully in his sleep in San Luis, Arizona. During his funeral,
26 Cardinal Roger M. Mahony, who celebrated the funeral mass,
27 called César Chávez “a special prophet for the world’s
28 farmworkers”; and

29 WHEREAS, Many declared that the UFW would die without
30 him, but on César Chávez’ birthday, March 31, 1994, under the
31 leadership of his son-in-law, Arturo Rodríguez, the UFW marched
32 343 miles from Delano to Sacramento, echoing César Chávez’
33 historic 1966 march, and demonstrated that the UFW still worked
34 for farmworkers; and

35 WHEREAS, In 1990, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de
36 Gortari awarded César Chávez “El Aguila Azteca” (the Aztec
37 Eagle), Mexico’s highest award presented to people of Mexican
38 heritage who have made major contributions outside Mexico. He
39 also became the second Mexican American to receive the
40 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the

1 United States, which was presented posthumously to his wife,
2 Helen Chávez, and their children on August 8, 1994, by President
3 William Jefferson Clinton; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1994, César Chávez' family and the officers of
5 the UFW created the César E. Chávez Foundation to inspire current
6 and future generations by promoting the ideals of César Chávez'
7 life, work, and vision. Communities throughout California and the
8 United States have honored the memory of César Chávez by
9 naming schools, parks, children's centers, streets, and other public
10 works after the great labor leader; and

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

19 WHEREAS, In the year 2000, the Legislature enacted Senate
20 Bill 984 (Chapter 213 of the Statutes of 2000) to create an annual
21 state holiday on César Chávez' birthday, March 31. This holiday
22 provides all Californians the opportunity to learn from César
23 Chávez' life and provides schoolchildren the opportunity to learn
24 through community service; and

25 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education on Wednesday,
26 February 6, 2002, adopted a model curriculum on the life and work
27 of César Chávez, fulfilling a key provision of Chapter 213 of the
28 Statutes of 2000, that also includes topics on pesticides,
29 immigration, and agriculture's role in the economy; now, therefore,
30 be it

31 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
32 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature recognizes March 31,
33 2011, as the anniversary of the birth of César Chávez, and calls
34 upon all Californians to participate in appropriate observances to
35 remember César Chávez as a symbol of hope and justice to all
36 persons; and be it further

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

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