

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 29, 2012
AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY FEBRUARY 27, 2012
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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 73

Introduced by Assembly Member Alejo

(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Monning)

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

(Coauthors: Senators Calderon and Evans)

June 29, 2011

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 73—Relative to César Chávez.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 73, as amended, Alejo. 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

children to Delano, California. There, with \$1,200 in life savings that was soon gone, César Chávez, his family, and close friends began building the National Farm Workers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers of America (UFW); and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Although César Chávez was uncomfortable with personal recognition in life, since his passing Chávez has been

1 honored in hundreds of communities. César Chávez was awarded
2 “El Aguila Azteca” (the Aztec Eagle), Mexico’s highest award
3 presented to people of Mexican heritage. In 1994, President Bill
4 Clinton posthumously presented César Chávez with America’s
5 highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2006,
6 California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger inducted César
7 Chávez into the first class of the California Hall of Fame. In 2011,
8 the United States Navy announced naming the latest Lewis and
9 Clark-class cargo ship being built in San Diego the USNS César
10 Chávez; and

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

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

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

39 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Legislature passed and Governor Gray
40 Davis signed into law Senate Bill 984 (Chapter 213 of the Statutes

1 of 2000), to create the first annual state holiday in the country on
2 César Chávez's birthday, March 31. Under that law, the State
3 Board of Education also created a statewide curriculum on Chávez
4 and encourages schools across the state to engage teachers and
5 students in service learning projects as a way of honoring the
6 legendary farm labor and civil rights leader; now, therefore, be it

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

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

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

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