ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 69

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman ELIANA PINTOR MARIN
District 29 (Essex and Hudson)
Assemblyman ANTHONY S. VERRELLI
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)
Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO
District 20 (Union)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywomen Speight and Hall

SYNOPSIS

Designates March 31 of each year as “Cesar Chavez Day.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Labor Committee with technical review.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/18/2024)

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating March 31 of each year as "Cesar Chavez Day."

WHEREAS, Cesar Estrada Chavez was born on March 31, 1927, in Arizona, and from there moved to California where he grew up working in farm fields; and

WHEREAS, After his father was injured in an accident, Chavez left school after eighth grade and became a migrant farm worker so that his mother would not have to work in the fields; and

WHEREAS, Chavez joined the U.S Navy in 1946 and served for two years in the Western Pacific, and afterward, returned to working in farm fields; and

WHEREAS, He became the staff director for the Community Service Organization (CSO) in the 1950s and early 1960s and assisted individuals in his local community with tasks such as coordinating voter registration and leading campaigns against racial and economic discrimination; and

WHEREAS, In 1962, Chavez founded the National Farm Workers Association with just himself and his family as members, which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW), the union for farm workers, which grew to 50,000 members; and

WHEREAS, Chavez designed the logo for the union, an Aztec eagle, a powerful symbol that would be easy for union members to draw themselves on handmade flags; and

WHEREAS, Inspired by St. Francis, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Chavez embraced an approach of nonviolent protests, which included organized labor strikes, marches, boycotts of produce, as well as fasting by Chavez himself; and**,**

WHEREAS, In 1966, Chavez led a 340 mile march from Delano, California to Sacramento, California, to draw attention to the cause of striking farm workers, garnering thousands of supporters along the way; and

WHEREAS, Chavez was an innovator in developing bargaining strategies for exploited workers, and he was one of the first labor leaders to use boycotts in large-scale labor-management disputes, recruiting millions of followers to boycott grapes and other products for La Causa (the cause of the farm workers); and

WHEREAS, The boycotts led by Chavez ultimately led to the enactment of California's "Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975", the first and only law in the United States guaranteeing farm workers the right to form unions; and

WHEREAS, In 1968, Chavez fasted for 25 days in support of nonviolent protesting, he fasted for 25 days in 1972 over the enactment of an anti-union law in Arizona, and in the summer of 1988, Chavez fasted for 36 days to focus public attention on the poisoning of farm workers due to pesticides; and

WHEREAS, Chavez established the National Farm Workers Service Center in 1966, which is now the Cesar Chavez Foundation, a non-

profit organization that builds, renovates and manages affordable housing, operates the Radio Campesina network with music and educational Spanish language programming, and provides various educational services for children; and

WHEREAS, Chavez is known for the motto, "Sí se puede," which translates to "Yes, it can be done," spoken during one of his three fasts, and Chavez's efforts to fight for the rights of farm workers became known as "La Causa"; and

WHEREAS, Under Chavez, the UFW advanced employment rights for its workers, including but not limited to collective bargaining agreements with medical benefits for workers, and abolishment of a short-handled hoe that led to the crippling of many farm workers; and

WHEREAS, In the 1960s, Chavez voluntarily gave up his position and salary of staff director with the CSO to dedicate himself to La Causa, and he embraced a life of poverty, never earning more than $6,000 a year and never owning a home; and

WHEREAS, Although Chavez was most well-known for his advocacy for farm workers, he was never fearful to voice his beliefs, even when not shared by many of his followers, including being an early supporter of gay rights in the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, In 1962, President Kennedy offered Chavez a leadership position within the Peace Corps, but Chavez turned down the job to carry on his work; and

WHEREAS, Although Cesar Chavez died in 1993, his work and life continue to inspire oppressed workers and other groups of people to stand up for their rights; and

WHEREAS, President Clinton awarded the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, to Chavez posthumously; and

WHEREAS, March 31st is celebrated as Cesar Chavez Day in nine U.S. states and as a federal commemorative holiday, and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper, and in the public interest, for the Legislature and Governor of this State to commemorate and honor the anniversary of Cesar Chavez's birth; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. March 31 of each year is designated as "Cesar Chavez Day" to commemorate the anniversary of the birth of Cesar Chavez, who dedicated his life to provide a voice to oppressed migrant farm workers and their families.

2. The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation and call upon public officials, and all citizens of this State, to observe "Cesar Chavez Day" with appropriate programs and activities.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.