

By: Chavez

H.R. No. 765

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A postage stamp honoring Cesar E. Chavez, one of
2 America's foremost champions of social justice, is being issued by
3 the United States Postal Service on April 23, 2003; and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Chavez gained national renown as a founder and
5 longtime leader of the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO,
6 whose mission has fused advocacy for farm laborers with activism
7 for civil rights; and

8 WHEREAS, Born March 31, 1927, near Yuma, Arizona, and later
9 raised in California, Mr. Chavez spent much of his youth as a
10 migrant laborer; as a Latino and a farmworker, he learned firsthand
11 about the indignities of second-class citizenship and the unhealthy
12 working and living conditions endured by those who tended the
13 fields; and

14 WHEREAS, After serving in the U.S. Navy from 1944 to 1946,
15 Cesar Chavez returned to California, and in 1948 he married Helen
16 Fabela; four years later he became a community organizer for the
17 Community Service Organization (CSO), a Latino civil rights group
18 that focused most of its work in urban areas, and by the late 1950s
19 he had become its national director; and

20 WHEREAS, When in 1962 the CSO declined to organize California
21 farmworkers, Mr. Chavez and his colleague Dolores Huerta left the
22 organization to found the National Farm Workers Association, a
23 forerunner of the UFW; their fledgling union gained national
24 prominence just three years later when it came to the support of

1 workers who were striking California's grape growers; in addition
2 to assuming leadership of the strike, Mr. Chavez launched a
3 successful, nationwide consumers' boycott of nonunion grapes; and

4 WHEREAS, By the end of the five-year-long strike, the UFW had
5 organized all of the California table-grape industry and negotiated
6 the first collective bargaining agreements between American
7 farmworkers and corporations; in 1975 Cesar Chavez and the UFW
8 further succeeded in securing the passage of California's
9 Agricultural Labor Relations Act, the first law in U.S. history
10 granting farmworkers the right to unionize and bargain
11 collectively; numerous other achievements gained under his
12 leadership included the establishment of a farmworkers' medical
13 plan, pension plan, and credit union, as well as the National Farm
14 Workers Service Center, Inc., whose projects include the
15 development of affordable housing, health clinics, cooperatives,
16 and a retirement home; and

17 WHEREAS, Throughout his life, Cesar Chavez sought to advance
18 La Causa, the movement, through nonviolent means--through strikes,
19 pickets, and boycotts; on several occasions he also undertook
20 lengthy fasts to draw public attention to the farmworkers'
21 struggle; and

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Chavez continued to lead the UFW until his death
23 on April 23, 1993; more than 50,000 people from across the country
24 gathered to mourn him at his funeral, indicative of the
25 far-reaching impact he had made on American society; and

26 WHEREAS, Since that time, numerous schools, streets,
27 scholarships, monuments, buildings, and parks have been named in

1 his memory, a number of U.S. cities have initiated annual
2 celebrations in tribute to his life, and several states, including
3 Texas, have declared his birthday, March 31, a state holiday; in
4 1994 Mr. Chavez was posthumously awarded the nation's highest
5 honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom; and

6 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez chose to devote his life to the pursuit
7 of social and economic justice through nonviolent means, and his
8 courage and steadfastness in this great work brought improved
9 health, greater security, and hope for a brighter future to
10 countless people; now, therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 78th Texas
12 Legislature hereby commemorate the issuance of the Cesar E. Chavez
13 stamp by the U.S. Postal Service and join in honoring the life of
14 this revered American.