

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 474

WHEREAS, The Senate of the State of Texas takes pride in paying tribute to the life of Cesar Chavez on the occasion of Cesar Chavez Day on March 31, 2003; and

WHEREAS, Born March 31, 1927, near Yuma, Arizona, Cesar Chavez grew up in a hardworking family of farmers, living first in Arizona and then moving to California to work in the fields; he learned about injustice at an early age and was subject to discrimination throughout much of his childhood; Cesar and his brother attended 37 schools while traveling with their family from farm to farm, and in 1942, Cesar graduated from the eighth grade and became a migrant farm worker; and

WHEREAS, In 1944, at the age of 17, Cesar joined the United States Navy and served his country with distinction for two years; he married Helen Fabela in 1948, and after living for a while in Delano, the couple settled in San Jose, where Cesar worked in apricot orchards and was influenced by Fred Ross, who was head of the Community Service Organization; and

WHEREAS, Cesar quickly became an active leader in the Community Service Organization; he organized voter registration drives in the Mexican American community and formed new chapters of the organization throughout California and Arizona; he helped the organization to become the most effective Latino civil rights group of its time; and

WHEREAS, After serving as the director of the Community Service Organization, he left the group in 1962, moved with his wife and eight children back to Delano, and founded the National Farm Workers Association with the goal of improving conditions for migrant workers; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, Cesar's association voted to join a strike against the Delano area grape growers; the strike had been initiated by the AFL-CIO's Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee; the two groups united to form the United Farm Workers of America, and under Cesar's able leadership, the organization sustained a five-year strike and boycott that rallied the support of labor unions, churches, students, and minority groups throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, By 1970, the boycott had forced most table grape producers to sign contracts with the United Farm Workers, but in 1973, most growers tried to undermine the power of the organization by signing new contracts, thus sparking the largest farm labor strike in our country's history; and

WHEREAS, The boycott gained momentum and the support of nearly 17 million Americans, and eventually, California agricultural producers were forced to support the state's historic 1975 collective bargaining law that extended labor union protection to farm workers; and

WHEREAS, The California grape growers continued for years to refuse to honor contract agreements until November, 2000, when the boycott against California table grapes was concluded, bringing a successful end to the boycott begun by Cesar Chavez; and

WHEREAS, The United Farm Workers succeeded in making accomplishments of enormous historical significance; it was

responsible for establishing the first comprehensive union health benefits for farm workers and their families, the first functioning credit union for farm workers, and the first union contracts requiring rest periods, clean drinking water, and protective clothing against pesticide exposure; and

WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez used nonviolent tactics in pursuit of his causes and gave tirelessly of his time to the plight of farm workers; his efforts gave rise to La Causa and became a vital part of the national quest for Mexican American equality and justice; through incredible perseverance and sacrifices, including his well-known lengthy fasts, Cesar Chavez accomplished his goals and became not only a champion of the farm worker, but also a champion of the civil rights movement in our country; he inspired the farm workers with his motto "Si Se Puede!"; and

WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez was the 1991 recipient of the Aguila Azteca Award, the highest award Mexico can bestow on a person of Mexican heritage; after his death in 1993, his widow, Helen Chavez, accepted the Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor, for her late husband at a White House ceremony in 1994; President Bill Clinton lauded Cesar Chavez for having "faced formidable, often violent opposition with dignity and nonviolence"; and

WHEREAS, A true hero whose courage and determination served as an inspiration to millions of people throughout the world, Cesar Chavez left an indelible imprint on our country and on the lives of its citizens, and the schools of America should continue to educate our children about the life of this great man and his many accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, the 76th Legislature adopted S.B. 107 creating a State Optional Holiday in Texas in memory and to commemorate the life of a great American, Cesar Chavez; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 78th Legislature, hereby celebrate the remarkable life of Cesar Chavez and his invaluable contributions to our country and encourage all Texans to show appreciation for his achievements on Cesar Chavez Day; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be prepared in honor of the birthday of Cesar Chavez and as an expression of esteem from the Texas Senate.

Barrientos

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on March 31, 2003.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate