

By: Chavez

H.R. No. 11

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, It has long been the custom of the Texas House of
2 Representatives to honor exceptional individuals who have made this
3 world a better place in which to live, work, and raise a family; and

4 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez, who died on April 23, 1993, was one
5 such person whose legacy will continue to live on for generations of
6 Texans; and

7 WHEREAS, The founder and leader of the first successful farm
8 workers union in the United States, Mr. Chavez was born near Yuma,
9 Arizona, on March 31, 1927, to a farming family that lost its land
10 during the Great Depression; as a small child, he experienced the
11 harsh working conditions and crushing despair that characterize the
12 lives of many of this country's migrant workers; and

13 WHEREAS, At the tender age of 10, Mr. Chavez began traveling
14 with his family from farm to farm throughout the Southwest and left
15 school after completing the eighth grade so he could join his
16 parents and siblings in the harvesting of row crops, grapes, and
17 tree fruits; and

18 WHEREAS, During World War II, this patriotic American
19 answered his nation's call to arms and served with honor and
20 distinction as a member of the United States Navy; on his return to
21 civilian life, he met Helen Fabela while working in the vineyards of
22 Delano, California, and the couple soon married and settled in San
23 Jose; and

24 WHEREAS, While working in the nearby apricot orchards,

1 Mr. Chavez became involved with the Community Service Organization
2 and began coordinating voter registration drives in the
3 Mexican-American community and forming new chapters of the
4 organization throughout the states of California and Arizona; and

5 WHEREAS, He served as the group's national director during
6 the late 1950s and early 1960s, leaving the position in 1962 to
7 found the National Farm Workers Association, an organization that
8 soon grew to include more than 1,000 member families; in 1965, the
9 association joined with the AFL-CIO's Agricultural Workers
10 Organizing Committee in a strike against Delano grape growers that
11 was the first of many peaceful attempts to secure improved working
12 conditions for farm laborers; and

13 WHEREAS, One year later, the two groups merged to form the
14 United Farm Workers of America (UFW), and the able leadership of
15 Mr. Chavez sustained the organization through a five-year strike
16 and boycott that rallied the support of labor unions, churches, and
17 student, minority, and consumer groups throughout the country; and

18 WHEREAS, By 1970, the boycott had forced most table grape
19 producers to sign contracts with the United Farm Workers, an
20 affiliate of the AFL-CIO, but in 1973, most growers attempted to
21 undermine the power of the organization by signing new contracts
22 with the teamsters union, sparking the largest farm labor strike in
23 the history of the United States; and

24 WHEREAS, With nearly 17 million Americans honoring the
25 UFW-led boycott of California table grapes, Red Coach lettuce, and
26 Gallo wines, California agricultural producers were forced to
27 support the state's historic 1975 collective bargaining law that

1 extended labor union protection to farm workers; and

2 WHEREAS, His dedicated efforts were part of a national quest
3 for Mexican-American equality and justice that became known as "La
4 Causa," and effects from that movement are still being felt today;
5 many of the idealistic young people who joined his movement nearly
6 three decades ago have become prominent and respected leaders in
7 our state, including Senator Gonzalo Barrientos, Southwest Voter
8 Education Project founder Willy Velasquez, La Raza Unida founder
9 and political activist Jose Angel Gutierrez, and political
10 columnist Carlos Guerra; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Chavez's inspirational leadership, unwavering
12 commitment, and courageous personal sacrifices have helped
13 American farm workers earn decent wages and attain improved working
14 conditions, medical benefits, and protection from dangerous
15 pesticides; and

16 WHEREAS, In recognition of his ability to find solutions to
17 our country's most pressing social and economic problems through
18 nonviolent means, Mr. Chavez was posthumously awarded the nation's
19 highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, on
20 August 8, 1994; and

21 WHEREAS, Few people have had so profound an effect on society
22 as Cesar Chavez, thus it is indeed appropriate to reflect on the
23 legacy of this true American hero and to look forward to a future in
24 which agricultural workers are given the recognition and support
25 they deserve for performing one of our society's most important
26 roles; now, therefore, be it

27 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas

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1 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life and work of Cesar Chavez
2 on the thirteenth anniversary of his death; and, be it further

3 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
4 prepared for the family of Mr. Chavez as an expression of support
5 and highest regard by the Texas House of Representatives.