

By: Alonzo

H.R. No. 300

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Americans across the country are pausing on March
2 31, 2009, Cesar Chavez Day, to pay tribute to the inspiring life and
3 achievements of the founder and longtime leader of the United Farm
4 Workers of America (UFW), AFL-CIO, on the anniversary of his birth;
5 and

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

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

17 WHEREAS, When in 1962 the CSO declined to organize California
18 farmworkers, Mr. Chavez and his colleague Dolores Huerta left the
19 organization to found the National Farm Workers Association, a
20 forerunner of the UFW; their fledgling union gained national
21 prominence just three years later when it came to the support of
22 workers who were striking against California's grape growers; in
23 addition to assuming leadership of the strike, Mr. Chavez launched
24 a successful, nationwide consumers' boycott of nonunion grapes; and

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

13 WHEREAS, Over the course of his life, Cesar Chavez sought to
14 advance La Causa, the movement, through nonviolent means--through
15 strikes, pickets, and boycotts; on several occasions he also
16 undertook lengthy fasts to draw public attention to the
17 farmworkers' struggle; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Chavez continued to lead the UFW until his death
19 on April 23, 1993; more than 50,000 people from throughout the
20 nation gathered to mourn him at his funeral, indicative of the
21 far-reaching impact he had made on American society; and

22 WHEREAS, Since that time, numerous schools, streets,
23 scholarships, monuments, buildings, and parks have been named in
24 his memory, a number of U.S. cities have initiated annual
25 celebrations in tribute to his life, and several states, including
26 Texas, have declared his birthday, March 31, a state holiday; in
27 1994 Mr. Chavez was posthumously awarded the nation's highest

1 honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom; and

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

7 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas
8 Legislature hereby honor the life of Cesar E. Chavez and join the
9 citizens of the Lone Star State in commemorating the birth of this
10 revered American.