

By: Canales

H.R. No. 438

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, In the United States, an estimated three million
2 migrant and seasonal farmworkers cultivate, harvest, and prepare
3 crops for market or storage each year; and

4 WHEREAS, The first wave of migrant farmworkers arrived in the
5 United States in the mid-to-late 19th century; these early
6 travelers were experienced miners, workhands from cattle ranches,
7 and indentured servants fleeing Mexican traditional farms; between
8 1850 and 1880, more than 55,000 Mexican workers immigrated to the
9 United States, about two-thirds of them pursuing employment in
10 Texas; and

11 WHEREAS, Though many workers continued to immigrate at the
12 turn of the 20th century, the use of migrant laborers declined
13 during the Great Depression, as internal migrant workers from Dust
14 Bowl states moved West; the major federal labor laws of this era,
15 which established a minimum wage and set 16 as the minimum age for
16 work, excluded farmworkers, who could legally work at the age of 12;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Ethnographic accounts of migrant laborers during
19 that time reveal that most lived and worked under very poor
20 conditions, and many feared that complaining would lead to
21 deportation; in the years that followed, leaders like Cesar Chavez
22 and Dolores Huerta and groups like the United Farm Workers and the
23 National Center for Farmworker Health fought to ensure more humane
24 working conditions; and

1 WHEREAS, Migrant farmworkers are the engine that drives the
2 agricultural sector of the United States economy, a \$28 billion
3 industry, yet despite their tremendous contributions, most earn
4 annual incomes below the poverty level; and

5 WHEREAS, In addition to low wages, migrant farmworkers rarely
6 have access to workers' compensation or disability benefits, even
7 though their occupation is one of the most dangerous in America;
8 they suffer from the highest rates of toxic chemical injuries and
9 skin disorders, while only 10 percent report having
10 employer-provided health insurance; the consequences of these
11 conditions are alarming: according to the Centers for Disease
12 Control and Prevention, the life expectancy for migrant farmworkers
13 is 49 years, compared to 73 for the general U.S. population; and

14 WHEREAS, More than three million people work in the
15 agricultural industry in the United States, and one-third of those
16 are hired farmworkers, according to a 2006 report from the U.S.
17 Department of Agriculture; their presence has been shown to
18 increase the overall economic output of the regions in which they
19 labor, including Texas, where more than 131,000 migrant farmworkers
20 actively work, including more than 31,000 in Hidalgo County alone;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, The seasonal and intensive work that migrant
23 farmworkers do is integral to the success of the agricultural
24 economy of our country, and it is indeed fitting to honor the men
25 and women behind this honorable occupation; now, therefore, be it

26 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 83rd Texas
27 Legislature, hereby recognize April 1, 2013, as Migrant Farmworker

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1 Day and encourage all Texans to consider the contributions and
2 history of migrant farmworkers in the Lone Star State.