

By: Canales

H.R. No. 1431

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 safer  
24 working conditions and better wages; the advocacy for farmworker

1 rights and protection continues under La Union del Pueblo Entero, a  
2 sister organization of the United Farm Workers, which has 7,000  
3 members in South Texas; and

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

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

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

25 WHEREAS, The seasonal and labor-intensive work that migrant  
26 farmworkers perform is integral to the success of the agricultural  
27 economy of our country and our state, and it is indeed fitting to

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1 honor the men and women engaged in this honorable occupation; now,  
2 therefore, be it

3           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 83rd Texas  
4 Legislature hereby recognize April 23, 2013, as Migrant Farmworker  
5 Day and encourage all Texans to consider the contributions and  
6 history of migrant farmworkers in the Lone Star State.