

ASSEMBLY LABOR COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 69

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 11, 2024

The Assembly Labor Committee reports favorably Assembly Joint Resolution No. 69.

This joint resolution commemorates the birth and celebrates the life of Cesar Chavez by designating March 31 of each year as “Cesar Chavez Day.”

Cesar Chavez worked in the farm fields of California since he was a child, leaving school when his father suffered an accident so that his mother would not have to work in the fields. Chavez joined the U.S. Navy in 1946 and served for two years in the Western Pacific. Upon completion of his service, Chavez returned to work in the farm fields.

However, Chavez still had a desire to help others, and despite only having an eighth grade education, he became the staff director of the Community Service Organization (CSO) in the 1950’s and early 1960’s. In this position, Chavez assisted individuals with important tasks such as voter registration. Although this work provided Chavez with a stable salary, he voluntarily left this position to dedicate himself to “La Causa,” standing up for the employment rights of oppressed migrant farm workers and their families. By doing so, Chavez took on a life of poverty, never earning more than \$6,000 per year.

Inspired by St. Francis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez employed a strategy of non-violent advocacy for the rights of farm workers. This advocacy included labor strikes and the boycotting of grapes and other produce. The boycotting ultimately led to the passage of California’s Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the first and only law guaranteeing farm workers the right to unionize.

Further, Chavez led a 340 mile march from Delano, California to Sacramento, California in 1966. Additionally, Chavez engaged in fasting on three separate occasions: in 1968, Chavez fasted for 25 days; in 1972 Chavez fasted for another 25 days; and in 1988, at the age of 61, Chavez fasted for 36 days.

Chavez founded the National Farm Workers Association, which is now the United Farm Workers (UFW), the union for farm workers, in 1962. Moreover, Chavez formed the National Farm Workers Service Center in 1966, now the Cesar Chavez Foundation, which provides educational services to children, provides and manages affordable housing projects and operates the Radio Campesina network, providing Spanish language music and educational programming.

Although Chavez died in 1993, his legacy endures. In 1994, President Clinton awarded the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor, to Chavez posthumously, and Chavez's work and life continue to inspire many others.

With this designation, the Legislature and the Governor honor the life of Cesar Chavez and continue to raise awareness for "La Causa."

This resolution was prefiled for introduction in the 2024-2025 session pending technical review. As reported, the resolution includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.