



HR0775

LRB102 26977 MST 38195 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are pleased to commend the work of farm
4 workers' leader César Estrada Chávez; and

5 WHEREAS, César Chávez was born to immigrant parents on
6 March 31, 1927 on a farm near Yuma, Arizona; in the late 1930s,
7 his family lost their farm and became migrant workers in
8 California; he quit school after the 8th grade in order to help
9 support his family by working in the fields full time; and

10 WHEREAS, From a young age, César Chávez encountered
11 wretched migrant camps, corrupt labor contractors, meager
12 wages for backbreaking work, and bitter racism; he later
13 helped improve those conditions for millions of workers across
14 the U.S.; and

15 WHEREAS, César Chávez was introduced to labor organizing
16 in 1952 when community organizer Fred Ross recruited him to
17 the Community Service Organization; he soon took the position
18 of national director for the organization but resigned in 1962
19 to devote his time to organizing a union for farm workers; and

20 WHEREAS, Driven to improve the working conditions he
21 experienced as a child, César Chávez co-founded the National

1 Farm Workers Association in 1962, which would later become the
2 United Farm Workers of America (UFW); and

3 WHEREAS, César Chávez's leadership and nonviolent tactics
4 were utilized during the Delano, California grape strike,
5 which began in September 1965; his fasts and the 340-mile
6 march from Delano to Sacramento focused national attention on
7 the problems of farm workers; the marchers wanted California
8 to pass laws that would permit farm workers to organize into a
9 union and allow collective bargaining agreements; and

10 WHEREAS, The first union contracts required rest periods,
11 clean drinking water, hand washing stations, and protective
12 clothing to prevent pesticide exposure; the contracts were
13 signed in 1966 but were followed by more years of conflict; in
14 1968, César Chávez began a fast that lasted 25 days to protest
15 the increasing advocacy of violence within the union; on July
16 29, 1970, 26 Delano-area growers formally signed contracts
17 recognizing the UFW, bringing peace to the vineyard; and

18 WHEREAS, After a hard-fought battle with the California
19 state government and various growers, the United Farm Workers
20 of America and César Chávez managed to pass the landmark
21 Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, which guaranteed
22 California farm workers the right to organize and bargain with
23 their employers; and

1 WHEREAS, César Chávez passed away in his sleep on April
2 23, 1933 after devoting his life to making a change for the
3 working class by fighting for equal pay and better working
4 conditions; and

5 WHEREAS, On August 8 1994, César Chávez posthumously
6 received a Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill
7 Clinton in recognition of the formidable and often violent
8 oppositions he faced with dignity and nonviolence; and

9 WHEREAS, Today, the United Farm Workers of America
10 continues its vigilant protection of its many union members;
11 the UFW remains strong, a fact that would certainly make César
12 Chávez proud; therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
14 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
15 we commend the work of farm workers' leader César Estrada
16 Chávez; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
18 presented to the family of César Chávez as a symbol of our
19 great esteem and respect.