

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 92

Honoring the accomplishments and legacy of César Estrada Chávez.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 31, 2009

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. BURRIS, Mr. REID, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. BENNET, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. UDALL of Colorado) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Honoring the accomplishments and legacy of César Estrada Chávez.

Whereas César Estrada Chávez was born on March 31, 1927, near Yuma, Arizona, where he spent his early years on his family's farm;

Whereas at the age of 10, César Estrada Chávez joined the thousands of migrant farm workers laboring in fields and vineyards throughout the Southwest, when his family lost their farm due to a bank foreclosure;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez, after attending more than 30 elementary and middle schools and achieving an eighth-grade education, left to work full-time as a farm worker to help support his family;

Whereas at the age of 17, César Estrada Chávez entered the United States Navy and served the Nation with distinction for 2 years;

Whereas in 1948, César Estrada Chávez returned from military service to marry Helen Fabela, whom he met working in the vineyards of central California, and had 8 children;

Whereas as early as 1949, César Estrada Chávez committed himself to organizing farm workers to campaign for safe and fair working conditions, reasonable wages, decent housing, and the outlawing of child labor;

Whereas in 1952, César Estrada Chávez joined the Community Service Organization, a prominent Latino civil rights group, and worked to coordinate voter registration drives and conduct campaigns against discrimination in East Los Angeles, and later served as the national director of the organization;

Whereas in 1962, César Estrada Chávez left the Community Service Organization to found the National Farm Workers Association, which eventually became the United Farm Workers of America;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez was a strong believer in the principles of nonviolence practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez effectively utilized peaceful tactics, such as fasting in 1968 for 25 days, in 1972 for 25 days, and in 1988 for 38 days, to call attention to the terrible working and living conditions of farm workers in the United States;

Whereas under the leadership of César Estrada Chávez, the United Farm Workers of America organized thousands of

migrant farm workers to fight for fair wages, health care coverage, pension benefits, livable housing, and respect;

Whereas through his commitment to nonviolence, César Estrada Chávez brought dignity and respect to the farm workers who organized themselves, and became an inspiration and a resource to other people in the United States and people engaged in human rights struggles throughout the world;

Whereas the influence of César Estrada Chávez extends far beyond agriculture and provides inspiration for those working to better human rights, to empower workers, and to advance an American Dream that includes all its inhabitants of the United States;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez died on April 23, 1993, in San Luis, Arizona, only miles from his birthplace of 66 years earlier;

Whereas more than 50,000 people attended the funeral services of César Estrada Chávez in Delano, California, and he was laid to rest at the headquarters of the United Farm Workers of America, known as Nuestra Señora de La Paz, located in the Tehachapi Mountains at Keene, California;

Whereas since his death, schools, parks, streets, libraries, and other public facilities, and awards and scholarships have been named in honor of César Estrada Chávez;

Whereas since his death, 10 States and dozens of communities across the Nation honor the life and legacy of César Estrada Chávez on March 31 of each year, the day of his birth;

Whereas César Estrada Chávez was a recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Prize during his lifetime, and

after his death was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom on August 8, 1994; and

Whereas the United States should not cease its efforts to ensure equality, justice, and dignity for all people in the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes the accomplishments and example of a great American hero, César Estrada Chávez;
3
4 (2) pledges to promote the legacy of César Estrada Chávez; and
5

6 (3) encourages the people of the United States to commemorate the legacy of César Estrada Chávez, and to always remember his great rallying cry, “Sí, se puede!”.

