

urging the Speaker of the House to bring to this floor the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, an agreement that's good for Illinois farmers, good for Illinois workers, and good for Illinois manufacturers.

Let me begin by asking some important questions. What nation in Latin America is the most longstanding democracy? The Republic of Colombia. What nation in Latin America is the United States' most reliable and dependable partner against narcotics and against terrorism? The Republic of Colombia. What nation today has the most popular elected official year after year after year in their own country? That is President Uribe of Colombia. The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is a good agreement for my State of Illinois. We are a big winner, as is the United States.

In 2006, Illinois exported \$214 million in exports to Colombia, but that's just the beginning. Why? Because Illinois exports, U.S. exports to Colombia are taxed by tariffs. But their exports to the United States are not taxed by tariffs. So right now trade is a one-way street. We want to make it a two-way street.

As a result of this trade agreement, 80 percent of U.S. exports that are currently taxed will be duty-free immediately. And as we know, our exports to other countries grow 50 percent faster with countries we have trade agreements with. So it's a win-win-win for American workers, American farmers, and American manufacturers. We want to be competitive with Asia.

We know Colombia is a reliable partner, our most important ally. We know Colombia is a longstanding democracy. We also know that President Uribe is popular. He was elected to stem the violence in Colombia. He was elected to push the FARC, the leftist narcotrafficking terrorist organization, out of the country. And he's made tremendous progress. And today because of his success in expanding government presence throughout the country, bringing stability and order and safety and security to Colombia, his approval rating in his own country year after year has been over 80 percent. Compare that to this Congress which has a 15 percent approval rating.

Now there are those who oppose this trade agreement and they are the same people who have opposed every trade agreement. They say not enough is done for labor. When the Peru and Colombia trade agreements were finalized, my Democratic friends said we needed to do more regarding labor rights. Both Peru and Colombia complied. And, of course, Peru has been ratified, but Colombia has not. Now they say that there's too much labor violence in Colombia. Well, let's look at the facts. Seventy-one percent of Colombians say they are more secure under President Uribe. Seventy-three percent of Colombians say Uribe respects human rights. Homicides are down 40 percent. Kidnappings are down

76 percent. In fact, the murder rate in Colombia today is lower than Washington, D.C., lower than Baltimore.

Here are the facts on labor violence: The last 2 years, President Uribe has hired 418 new prosecutors; 545 new investigators; created over 2,166 new posts overall in the Prosecutor General's office; and increased funding for prosecution of those who commit violent acts by 75 percent.

Carlos Rodriguez, president of the United Workers Confederation, said about these new posts: "Never in the history of Colombia have we achieved something so important." Now when it comes particularly to labor leaders, President Uribe has allocated almost \$39 million to providing bodyguards for protection for labor union leaders. One thousand five hundred union leaders and activists provided protection, the second largest protected group in the nation of Colombia. And it's been successful. In fact, no labor leader under this protection has lost his life or experienced violence.

As the Washington Post noted yesterday, the murder rate for labor activists is lower than the national rate for the rest of the country. So President Uribe has made tremendous progress in reducing violence. For those who point to labor activists being the subject of labor violence, he's made even greater success in reducing violence.

I would also note that the International Labor Organization has removed Colombia from its labor watch list and Colombia has agreed to permanent International Labor Organization presence in Colombia. Perhaps most telling, 14 Colombian labor union leaders have personally given their support to the Trade Promotion Agreement and they represent 79,000 organized workers. We continue to hear opposition with no explanation.

The bottom line is this is a good trade agreement. Colombia is our best ally. If you care about the future of Latin America, if you care about democracy, if you care about security, we need to bring the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement to this floor for a vote.

MARKING CESAR CHAVEZ'S BIRTHDAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) for 2 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues.

Today I rise to honor a hardworking labor leader, Cesar Chavez, who founded the United Farm Workers Union and dedicated his life to promote non-violence through boycotts and strikes that would protect farm workers from the dangers of pesticides, low wages, and the denial of fair and free elections.

I met Cesar Chavez in the 1970s when he came to organize farm workers in Texas. I was a young Texas State Representative and was inspired by his

leadership then and as he inspires people today in this century.

Cesar Estrada Chavez was born on March 31, 1927, in Yuma, Arizona. It was 10 years later in 1937 that like many other migrant families, his parents lost their farm and their home. This was a hardship that led them to join thousands of other migrant farmer workers to toil in the California fields.

In 1944 Cesar Chavez enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he served and fought for the United States in the Pacific during World War II. He later married Helen Fabela and fathered eight children. Although Cesar Chavez was not able to complete high school because his family required his helping hands in the California fields, he not only endured the hardships of migrant working conditions but experienced the injustices that he later made into a personal crusade for the migrant farm workers.

His personal struggles as a migrant farm worker led him to find a non-violent way to help Hispanic farm workers. In the 1950s, Cesar quietly began to study and work for the better working conditions of migrant workers. His persistent struggle to help Hispanics led him to organize the National Farm Worker group in Fresno, California. Cesar Chavez was one of the first Hispanic activists that begun what was a series of boycotts and strikes against California grape growers. Most notably, he called a boycott against Schenley Industries, a major California grape producer. His series of boycotts and strikes caused a national awareness that provoked the late Senate Robert F. Kennedy to criticize local officials after uncovering strike-breaking practices against farm workers. The National Farm Workers Union later reached a groundbreaking settlement with Schenley Industries that marked the first contract ever signed for farm workers in the United States.

This was a monumental achievement that the United Farm Workers would not have been able to accomplish without the hard work and determination of this courageous individual.

As the struggle to protect farm workers continued, Cesar Chavez even sacrificed his health several times by fasting. He saw his fight as a personal fight to end the terrible suffering of the farm workers and their children.

Cesar Chavez worked tirelessly to improve the lives of America's farm workers by securing their rights to organize and bargain collectively for fair working conditions. Chavez showed us that together we can make a safe and prosperous America with a strong and vibrant economy—an America with good jobs and good pay. Fifteen years after his passing, his life's work and legacy continues to inspire millions.

CESAR CHAVEZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of honoring Cesar Chavez,

an American hero, a role model, and an inspiration to many Americans. In this Congress I have reintroduced H. Res. 76, a resolution urging the establishment of a national holiday for Cesar Chavez. This resolution was introduced and supported by the United Farm Workers of America, Cesar E. Chavez Foundation, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and many other of my fellow colleagues. We are urging for a holiday to honor Cesar's memory and educate our youth and community about this remarkable yet humble leader who paved the way for many of us.

Cesar Chavez is a true American hero. He carried the torch for justice and freedom. He was a beacon of light for many of us Latinos in the community. His legacy will live on in our hearts and hopes and in our dreams. To quote him, *si se puede*, yes, it can be done.

This is the same cry we hear today, a cry of justice and equality and opportunity for all to have the American Dream here in the United States. Cesar represents the true essence of hope for many of us. From humble beginnings, Cesar was born near Yuma, Arizona, grew up in a migrant labor camp, and fought against the exploitation of workers at an early age.

In 1944, Cesar joined the United States Navy and honorably served his country as a veteran. With great courage and passion, he fought to preserve the principles of freedom and equality. He used this same courage and passion to stop the exploitation of workers.

Cesar was a trailblazer. In the early 1960s, he founded the United Farm Workers to gain nationwide attention of the exploitation of grape farmers, a too often forgotten labor force. He led his organization to increase protection for workers; to increase health and safety standards; to ban child labor from the field; to win fair wage guarantees; to fight against employment discrimination and the sexual harassment of female workers.

Cesar's dedication to social justice meant great sacrifices. This year marks the 40th anniversary of his famous public 25-day hunger strike calling for nonviolence. Cesar organized the farm workers to stand together and in one loud voice say, "From this day, we demand to be treated like men and we should be respected as human beings. We are not slaves. We are not animals. We are not alone."

I was lucky enough to be part of his funeral, attended by over 50,000 people. I also had the pleasure of meeting with Cesar Chavez on many occasions in the Inland Empire.

In his memory, the State of California in September of 1994 enacted a law designating March 31, Cesar's birthday, as a State holiday. However, Cesar's light reaches beyond California and across ethnic barriers and across income levels across our Nation. Ten States officially celebrate Cesar's birthday as a holiday. This month his

legacy will be remembered publicly all across the Nation in over 25 States and over 35 cities. These nationwide actions are about respect, *respeto*.

For this reason, I continue to call for the respect of a great man, a trailblazer who changed the world by using nonviolence. Cesar taught us that all workers deserve respect and dignity. Cesar, a common man with uncommon vision; a humble leader that forged together national coalitions of students, middle-class consumers, religious groups, minorities and others.

The significance and impact of Cesar's life transcends any one cause or struggle. In 1994 he was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in America. And yet we should have a holiday for him.

His slogan, *si se puede*, yes, it can be done, still rings in the hearts of many Latinos and non-Latinos that it can be done and never give up because you can achieve whatever you want.

Yes, I say *si se puede*, one day Cesar Chavez will be honored, respected and remembered throughout this Nation with a holiday. This is only the beginning. Nationwide we are raising awareness of a great man who has honored our Nation, who has served our country and sacrificed himself for the betterment of others. We will keep his legacy alive.

CESAR CHAVEZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) for 2 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. I thank the Speaker and I am very privileged this morning to pay special tribute and honor to the legacy of Cesar Estrada Chavez. Chavez dedicated his life to championing the rights of farm laborers and all working people and he did it through nonviolence. Recently I returned from a trip with the Speaker to India where I visited a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi and I recall that moment thinking about the nonviolence that was also expressed by Cesar Chavez in his movement to fight for dignity and respect for poor people, for people that were being oppressed.

Like Gandhi, Chavez believed that nonviolence is one of the most powerful tools to achieve change, including social and economic justice. Chavez was a follower also of Martin Luther King, Jr. believing in the power of prayer and spirituality. I have been inspired by the works of Cesar Chavez and also by the cofounder of the United Farm Workers, Dolores Huerta, and with that had introduced a resolution in this House to pay tribute to Dolores Huerta, one of the highest ranking members of the UFW. Yet until this day, we have not been able to bring that resolution up and I wonder why. And I ask the question—why can't this House also pay tribute to a strong leader, a female, who represents the workers? Also with that in mind, I intro-

duced legislation, the Cesar Estrada Chavez Study Act, H.R. 359, that did pass out of this House, that would for the first time authorize the Department of Interior to study public lands important to the life and history of Cesar Chavez through the National Park Service. Right now that bill has made its way out of the House and is over at the Senate. I would ask that the Senate Members there take action on the bill as soon as possible.

We should be grateful and never forget the accomplishments and achievements of Cesar Chavez to improve civil rights for every single American and those individuals who work and toil in the fields. Let us not forget the fruits and vegetables that we receive on our table come from those very farm workers here who may not even today have the same protections that Cesar Chavez worked so hard for.

CESAR CHAVEZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) for 2 minutes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I rise with my colleagues today to remember a great American on his birthday. Cesar Chavez was born 83 years ago and would have been 83 years old yesterday. He devoted his entire life to the betterment of this Nation and to its people. He gave voice to the voiceless. In working with the farm workers, in organizing their union, in fighting for their dignity, respect and equal treatment on the job, he worked for farm workers who were not considered equals in any sense. He gave voice to the voiceless.

And in these times when we see these disturbing trends going on in our Nation, where even on the floor of this great people's hall we hear disturbing trends where people are marginalized, demonized, dehumanized because of who they are and the circumstances of their life, these disturbing trends should remind us of Cesar's legacy. His legacy was not about creating a situation where people are treated less than but creating a society where people were treated as equals, with respect and with dignity. Cesar insisted on the best for us and on the best in us. He insisted on a sense of faith about the future and our families and our Nation. He insisted on tolerance, that we as human beings should understand and respect each other and with that respect comes understanding and with that respect comes a better nation.

He insisted on equality, that all humans are created equal under our Constitution, all people are created equal under our Constitution, and he fought his entire life to make that value a reality for all of us.

So when we celebrate his birthday and we celebrate his legacy, let us not forget that Cesar's legacy is a living legacy, a legacy that calls upon us day