

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CELEBRATING LIDERES
CAMPEASINAS'S THIRTIETH ANNI-
VERSARY

HON. RAUL RUIZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, December 22, 2018

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the thirtieth anniversary of Lideres Campesinas and to congratulate the incredible women of the Coachella Valley who founded it.

For three decades, Lideres Campesinas has empowered farm working women across California to advocate for themselves, their families, and their communities in a struggle for equality.

I was 16 when Lideres Campesinas was founded by friends and neighbors I've known my whole life.

These were women who looked out for me and fed me tamales.

One of the members even gave me the affectionate nickname, "mi chaparrito," Mexican slang for short guy.

Actually, she still calls me chaparrito.

These women have deep connections to our community, but as farmworkers, they endure many hardships.

Farmworkers don't share the same protections under our labor laws, and they often face difficult working conditions and wage discrimination.

On top of that, women farmworkers face higher rates of domestic violence and sexual assault, and a severe lack of legal resources and women's health services.

The founders of Lideres Campesinas experienced those hardships firsthand, so to fight for themselves and their community, they decided to organize.

Maria Aguirre Rosales De Banuelos was one of those founders.

Maria migrated to the U.S. in 1977, and she held a demanding agricultural job for twenty years.

After being trapped in an abusive marriage for most of her life, Maria met with some of her farmworking neighbors in the Coachella Valley.

In that room, she realized she was not alone: many of the women she spoke to had also experienced domestic abuse, and like her, finally felt the freedom to share their experiences with others.

That realization gave Maria the strength to free herself from an abusive relationship, and to help create an organization that would con-

nect and empower women in the Coachella Valley.

That's how Lideres Campesinas was born.

Out of community.

Out of compassion.

And those are the values to which it has stayed true.

Lideres Campesinas has since grown to include chapters across California.

By providing women with health education services, they are helping women live healthy and productive lives.

By educating their communities about workplace harassment and labor exploitation, they have helped women stand up for their rights.

And by connecting women with legal and social services, they have helped women remedy the discrimination they face.

Maria Aguirre passed away earlier this year, but she will forever be remembered as an empathetic, kind-hearted leader of our community.

To the women of Lideres Campesinas, thank you for your service to our community.

A todas las mujeres de Lideres Campesina, gracias por su servicio a nuestras comunidades.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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