

SUBJECT: Optional March 31 state holiday honoring Cesar Chavez

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Wolens, S. Turner, Alvarado, Counts, Danburg, Hunter, D. Jones, Longoria, Merritt

0 nays

6 absent — Bailey, Brimer, Craddick, Hilbert, Marchant, McCall

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 9 — voice vote

WITNESSES: *(On House companion bill, HB 316)*
For — Joe Morin and J.R. Gonzales, Texas Association of Mexican American Chamber of Commerce; Walter Hinojosa, Texas AFL-CIO; Clarissa Martinez, National Council of La Raza; Paul Hernandez and Marcos Deleon, El Concilio/Coordinadora 2000; Antonio Carrizales; Bill Elliott; Gustavo Garcia; Elias Fores Harrington; Jamie Martinez

Against — None

DIGEST: SB 107 would designate March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day in observance of the birthday of Cesar Chavez.

That day would be allowed as an optional state holiday. All state offices would remain open at a minimum level, but employees could have a day off with pay in exchange for working on another prescribed holiday falling on a weekday. The bill would specify that the total number of holidays in a year to which a state agency employee was entitled would not be changed.

SB 107 would take effect September 1, 1999

SUPPORTERS SAY: Cesar Chavez was an civil rights leader who organized U.S. farm workers in the 1960s and co-founded the United Farm Workers of America. He led numerous strikes, non-violent protests, and national boycotts of agricultural products to bring attention to the working conditions of farm laborers in the

Southwest. He organized campaigns for safe and fair working conditions, reasonable wages, decent housing, and the outlawing of child labor.

Honoring his birthday as an optional state holiday would help to raise public consciousness about this great Hispanic leader and would give children an additional leader to look up to.

Cesar Chavez died in 1993. He was a recipient of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Peace Prize and was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1994.

Two other states, California and Arizona, have enacted memorial legislation for Cesar Chavez, and similar legislation is pending in New Mexico and in the U.S. Congress.

Making Cesar Chavez Day an optional holiday would not result in any cost to the state, nor would it lower the quality of services that state government offices provide to the public. It would cause no more confusion than the other state holidays that do not coincide with federal holidays and for which state offices remain open, including Confederate Heroes Day, Texas Independence Day, San Jacinto Day, Emancipation Day, and Lyndon Baines Johnson's Birthday, and would be observed in lieu of, rather than in addition to, these holidays.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The state already has numerous state employee holidays. Another state holiday not recognized by the federal government, particularly an optional one, would create confusion at state agencies regarding whether staff would be entitled to take that day off and could result in diminished services to the public.