

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	Proclamation Declaring Cesar Chavez Day in the City of Shoreline		
DEPARTMENT:	Community Services		
PRESENTED BY:	Sunil Tolton, Equity and Social Justice Program Coordinator		
ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance	<input type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion
	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proclamation

ISSUE STATEMENT:

Born in Yuma, Arizona on March 31, 1927, Cesar Chavez was a Mexican-American labor and civil rights leader who fought to improve the working and living conditions of farm workers. After losing their homestead through fraud and foreclosure, his family moved to California as migrant farm workers in the late 1930s during the Great Depression. Mr. Chavez experienced the unfair labor practices and abuses that farmworkers endured, such as exposure to dangerous pesticides, low wages, lack of access to clean water or restrooms, and terrible housing conditions.

After the 8th grade, Mr. Chavez worked full time in the fields and joined the U.S. Navy at age 19 in a segregated unit for two years. After he returned, he married Helen Fabela, and would eventually have eight children. In 1952, Chavez began working for the Community Service Organization (CSO), a Latino civil rights group, as a grassroots organizer and became a national director registering new voters and fighting for racial and economic justice.

In the 1940s through the 1960s, the exploitative “bracero program” brought thousands of Mexicans to the U.S. to fill World War II labor shortages, undercut domestic wages, and break strikes. Workers attempting to organize into unions faced discrimination and were violently suppressed. Influenced by the nonviolent civil disobedience of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mr. Chavez used his life savings and co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in 1962 with Dolores Huerta, who had also worked at CSO.

In 1965, the NFWA launched a strike against California’s grape growers along with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), a Filipino-American labor group. The strike lasted five years with critical actions led by Mr. Chavez, including a 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento in 1966, and his 25-day hunger strike in 1968. With national support, the strike led to a nationwide boycott of California grapes, successful negotiations with farmers, and recognition of the importance and rights for all farm workers.

The NWFA and AWOC merged and eventually became the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). Cesar Chavez continued to lead efforts to support farm workers' right to unionize and negotiate for better wages and working conditions. In 1993, Mr. Chavez died in his sleep near Yuma, Arizona and was honored by more than 50,000 mourners from Florida to California who came to show their respect. In recognition of Mr. Chavez's impact, President Barack Obama borrowed "Si, se puede" or "Yes, we can" as part of his presidential campaign in 2008.

Cesar Chavez saw the need for change and made a courageous choice to work to improve the lives of his fellow farm workers. All residents are encouraged to observe this day to recognize the contributions of farm workers, importance of labor rights, and take action to honor Cesar Chavez's enduring legacy.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Mayor announce the issuance of the proclamation.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment A: Cesar Chavez Day Proclamation

Approved By: City Manager **DT** City Attorney **MK**



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez was born on March 31, 1927, faced many struggles with his family as migrant farm workers, including exposure to dangerous pesticides, low wages, and terrible living conditions, and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chavez saw the need for change and led courageous efforts to improve the lives of his fellow farm workers through community organizing and non-violent civil disobedience, and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chavez founded the United Farm Workers (UFW) with Dolores Huerta, and fought for years to win historic gains for workers which improved wages and working conditions; and

WHEREAS, laborers across the country continue to struggle for fair treatment and fair wages to this day, let us remember the hope and determination of Cesar Chavez, echoing the words that have inspired so many, "Sí, se puede" – "Yes, we can!";

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Will Hall, Mayor of the City of Shoreline, on behalf of the Shoreline City Council, do hereby proclaim March 31, 2021 as

CESAR CHAVEZ DAY

in the City of Shoreline, and encourage all residents to observe this day by remembering the contributions of farm workers whose labor feeds the nation and to engage in action that honors Cesar Chavez's enduring legacy.

Will Hall, Mayor