



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HELEN FABELA CHÁVEZ AS A DEVOTED WIFE, MOTHER AND CIVIL RIGHTS PIONEER

WHEREAS, Helen Fabela Chávez was born on January 21, 1928, in Brawley, California, her mother having immigrated from Sombrete, Mexico, and her father from San Jacinto, Mexico; and;

WHEREAS, Helen helped her husband Cesar Chávez launch and sustain what became the first enduring farm workers union in the United States using her fierce determination to help change the lives of thousands of farm workers and millions of others who were inspired by La Causa; and

WHEREAS, Helen passed on June 6, 2016 and is survived by seven children, 31 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren;

WHEREAS, Helen began working in the fields when she was 14 and her family worked as migrant laborers, first in the Imperial Valley and later in the San Joaquín Valley and thus exposed her to the hardships of farm labor; and

WHEREAS, Helen met her husband, Cesar Chávez, in Delano while they were both laboring as farm workers in the mid-1940s. Helen and Cesar corresponded while he served in the Navy and married upon his discharge in 1948; and

WHEREAS, Helen and Cesar Chávez moved to Delano giving up their middle-class lifestyle for a life of self-imposed poverty to begin building what became the United Farm Workers; and

WHEREAS, Helen returned to field work while Cesar Chávez organized up and down California's vast Central Valley and often had to raise their eight children by herself while Cesar was on the road; and

WHEREAS, when the Delano Grape Strike started in 1965, Helen took over management of the Farm Workers Credit Union, and worked full time at the union office while maintaining a home life. She continued serving the Farm Worker Movement for decades; and

WHEREAS, in 1978 she was arrested and convicted with her husband for picketing a cantaloupe field where workers were represented by the Teamsters Union; and

WHEREAS, Helen continued serving the Farm Worker Movement for decades; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, a year after her husband's death, Chávez accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to him by President Clinton; and

WHEREAS, in 2008 Chávez was awarded Latina of the Year by the National Latino Peace Officers Association of Los Angeles Chapter.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners commemorates the life and legacy of Helen Fabela Chávez; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this text be spread upon the proceedings of this Honorable Body and that a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Helen Fabela Chávez.