
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Senator Susan Rubio

Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2156 **Hearing Date:** 3/24/2026
Author: Rivas and Limón, et al.
Version: 3/20/2026 Amended
Urgency: Yes **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Felipe Lopez

SUBJECT: Holidays: Farmworkers Day

DIGEST: This bill designates March 31 as Farmworkers Day and requires the Governor to annually proclaim March 31 as Farmworkers Day.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Recognizes various state holidays including:

- a) January 1st (New Year);
- b) Third Monday in January (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day);
- c) February 12th (Lincoln Day);
- d) Third Monday in February (Washington Day);
- e) March 31st (Cesar Chavez);
- f) April 24, known as “Genocide Remembrance Day”;
- g) Last Monday in May (Memorial Day);
- h) June 19, known as “Juneteenth;”
- i) July 4th;
- j) September 9 (Admission day);
- k) Fourth Friday in September (Native American Day);
- l) Second Monday in October (Columbus Day);
- m) November 11th (Veterans Day);
- n) December 25th;
- o) Good Friday from 12 noon until 3 p.m.

- 2) Specifies that if the above holidays are in conflict with the provisions of a memorandum of understanding, the memorandum of understanding shall be controlling without further legislative action.
- 3) Designates August 26 of each year as California Farmworker Day and requires the Governor to annually proclaim August 26 as California Farmworker Day.
- 4) Adopts state holidays as judicial holidays, with certain exceptions, including Admission Day and Columbus day.

This bill:

- 1) Deletes the designation of March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day and instead designates March 31 as Farmworkers Day.
- 2) Deletes the Requirement that the Governor proclaim March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day and instead requires the Governor to proclaim March 31 as Farmworkers Day.
- 3) Contains an urgency.

Background

Author's Statement. According to the Author's office, "the farmworkers rights movement has been rooted in the lasting values of dignity and justice. To honor the movement's rich California history and the steadfast dedication behind it, we are putting forward legislation to designate the following 2026 state holiday in California as Farmworkers Day."

New York Times Investigation. On March 18, 2026, the New York Times published the results of an investigation that outlined a series of allegations against César Chávez describing a pattern of sexual abuse and misconduct during his time as leader in the farmworker movement. According to the report, Chávez allegedly abused at least two young girls in the 1970s. One account describes inappropriate contact when the young girl was around 12 years old, followed by rape at age 15. Another young girl described repeated sexual encounters over several years starting when the girl was about 13 years old.

Among the most significant accounts are allegations from Dolores Huerta, co-founder of what eventually became the Farmworkers Union, who issued a public statement in response to the report by The New York Times. In her statement,

Dolores Huerta confirmed that she experienced sexual coercion by Chávez in the 1960s. She described that Chávez exerted power and control over her in ways that led to nonconsensual encounters resulting in two pregnancies. Dolores Huerta framed her experience in terms of survival rather than victimhood, stating that she now understands herself “as a survivor” of abuse and coercion, and emphasizing that power dynamics and loyalty to the farmworker movement contributed to her decision not to report earlier. In her own words, Dolores Huerta wrote:

I have never identified myself as a victim, but now I understand that I am a survivor – of violence, sexual abuse, of domineering men who saw me, and other women, as property, of things to control. The knowledge that he hurt young girls sickens me. My heart aches for everyone who suffered alone and in silence for years. There are no words strong enough to condemn those deplorable actions [Chávez] did. Cesar’s actions do not reflect the values of our community and movement. The farmworker movement has always been bigger and far more important than any one individual I have kept this secret long enough. My silence ends here.

Advocate Response. Following these allegations, advocates have emphasized that listening to survivors, believing their accounts, and offering meaningful support can play a critical role in the healing process. In public statements, the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN), describes the allegations as “grave and deeply distressing” noting that when prominent figures are accused of such profound betrayals of trust, the effects can reverberate across entire communities and may retraumatize survivors of sexual violence.

RAINN further underscored and reminded the public that there is no “right” time or “standard way” for a survivor to come forward. The organization emphasized that survivors, “cite personal or family reasons for not disclosing rape, and others are deterred by the stigma they perceive within their community or because they fear the outcome of reporting. The calculus is even harder when the person who committed the rape is such a prominent figure, which can lead survivors to fear they will not be believed or will be blamed for bringing down someone who is admired in their community. Ultimately, we need to trust survivors to make the decision that is right for them.”

Response by State and Local Jurisdictions. In response to allegations involving César Chávez, states and local jurisdictions—particularly across California and the Southwest—have undertaken a range of actions that reflect both immediate responses and long-term considerations regarding the commemoration of Chávez’s legacy. In the short term, several jurisdictions have canceled or suspended official

César Chávez Day events, while government leaders and organizations have issued statements emphasizing support for survivors.

Concurrently, several state and local governments are pursuing or considering the renaming of César Chávez Day to more broadly honor farmworkers, with legislative proposals and executive actions already underway in some areas. For example, the City of Los Angeles issued a proclamation to rename the holiday to Farmworkers Day, reflecting a broader commemorative focus.

At the local level, cities have begun evaluating and, in some cases, removing Chávez's name from public spaces, including streets, parks, schools, and civic buildings, as well as taking down statues, murals, and other commemorative displays. For example, the City of Fresno voted to restore original street names, reversing a prior renaming to "César Chávez Boulevard."

Beyond these immediate and symbolic responses, institutions such as museums, universities, and state agencies are engaging in broader cultural and historical reassessments, reconsidering how Chávez is represented in educational materials and public exhibits. Collectively, these actions seem to reflect a shift toward recognizing the broader farmworker movement while reevaluating the role of individual figures within it.

Farmworkers in California. With approximately \$50 billion in agricultural annual revenue, California is the leading agricultural state in the United States. California produces more than 350 commodities; including about one-third of the nation's vegetables and nearly two-thirds of the nation's fruits and nuts.

According to the Center for Farmworker Families, between one-third to one-half of all farmworkers in the United States reside in California, or approximately 500,000-800,000 farmworkers. The Salinas Valley, the "Salad Bowl of the Nation," employs more than 50,000 farmworkers. However, this number could be much higher given the difficulty with tracking data on immigrant farmworkers. Approximately 75% of all farmworkers in California are undocumented. Roughly, one-third of farmworkers are women.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, agriculture is considered one of the most dangerous industries in the nation. Common injuries involve exposure to the elements, health-related symptoms related to pesticide exposure in both farmworkers and their children, and farm equipment injuries. Even though farmworkers work in one of the most dangerous industries, they receive very little benefits and protections.

Prior/Related Legislation

AB 268 (Kalra, Chapter 358, Statutes of 2025) added Diwali to the list of state holidays, and authorizes public schools and state employees to take certain type of leave in recognition of Diwali, as specified.

SB 721 (Hueso, Chapter 496, Statutes of 2021) designates August 26 of each year as California Farmworker Day and requires the Governor to annually proclaim August 26 as California Farmworker Day.

AB 1655 (Jones-Sawyer, Chapter 753, Statutes of 2022) adds June 19, known as “Juneteenth,” to the list of state holidays and authorize state employees to elect to take time off with pay in recognition of Juneteenth, as specified.

AB 1801 (Nazarian, Chapter 761, Statutes of 2022) added April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day,” to the list of state holidays and authorize community colleges and public schools to close on April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day,” as specified. Additionally, the bill would authorize state employees to elect to take time off with pay in recognition of “Genocide Awareness Day,” as specified.

AB 2596 (Low, Chapter 792, Statutes of 2022) repealed provisions requiring the Governor to annually proclaim the Lunar New year, and instead recognized the Lunar Year as a state holiday and authorizes state employees, with specified exceptions, to elect to receive eight hours of holiday credit for the Lunar New Year in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal holiday credit, as specified.

AB 2644 (Reyes, Chapter 130, Statutes of 2018) requires the Governor to annually proclaim April 10 as Dolores Huerta Day, set apart that date as a date having special significance, and encouraged all public schools and educational institutions to conduct exercises remembering the life of Dolores Huerta.

AB 7 (Bonta, Chapter 29, Statutes of 2015) requires the Governor to annually proclaim October 25 as Larry Itliong Day, designated that date each year as having special significance, and encouraged all public schools and educational institutions to conduct exercises remembering the life of Larry Itliong and the contributions he made to the state.

AB 1973 (Hernandez, Chapter, Statutes of 2014) established the Fourth Friday in September as a state holiday known as Native American Day.

AB 1953 (Baca, Chapter 637, Statutes of 1998) renamed "American Indian Day" to "Native American Day" and authorized the State Board of Education to adopt a model curriculum guide related to "Native American Day."

SB 984 (Polanco, Chapter 213, Statutes of 2000) established a paid holiday for state employees each March 31, which would be designated as "Cesar Chavez Day."

SB 1373 (Torres, Chapter 1011, Statutes of 1994) requires the Governor to annually proclaim March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day, and included March 31, known as Cesar Chavez Day, in the list of state holidays.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT:

None received

OPPOSITION:

None received