

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 1394 (Gonzalez)
As Amended June 11, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill replaces the March 31 holiday of Cesar Chavez Day with an August 6 holiday for Farmworkers Day.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes August 6, known as "Farmworkers Day" as a state holiday.
- 2) Removes the designation of March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day for purposes of holidays on which community colleges and public schools are authorized to close, and instead would authorize community colleges and public schools to close, if the governing board agrees, on August 6, known as Farmworkers Day.
- 3) Revises statutory references and provisions applicable to state employees, certain community college employees, and public-school employees to recognize August 6 as Farmworkers Day, as specified.
- 4) Requires the Governor to annually proclaim August 6, instead of March 31, as Farmworkers Day, and repeals the proclamation of August 26 as California Farmworker Day.

COMMENTS

Background.

What problem does this bill solve? According to information provided by the author's office, "In March 2026, the Legislature passed AB 2156 (Rivas) Chapter 7, Statutes of 2026, which renamed Cesar Chavez Day as Farmworkers Day. The change was made following a New York Times investigative report 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. Supporters noted that the bill shifted recognition from an individual to the broader farmworker movement. Due to time constraints and the need for continuity, the holiday remained on March 31, while consideration of an alternative date was deferred. This bill revisits that issue by establishing a date that more appropriately recognizes and celebrates California's farmworkers.

This bill seeks to change Farmworkers Day from March 31 to August 6. This date corresponds to the National Farmworkers Appreciation Day, which was officially designated by President Bill Clinton in 1994. Designating Farmworkers Day on a date already recognized nationally to honor farmworkers is a fitting way to celebrate the thousands of essential workers who sustain California's agricultural industry. It recognizes their indispensable contributions, celebrates their resilience and sacrifice, and reminds us of the continuing importance of ensuring dignity, safety and fairness for those who work in our fields. As highlighted in Governor Newsom's Proclamation declaring Farmworkers Day, California is home to over one-third of all farmworkers in the United States, and these workers quite literally feed the nation. As the country's largest agricultural state, California produces one-third of the nation's vegetables and

nearly two-thirds of its fruits and nuts. As the proclamation notes, "We are the fourth-largest economy in the world because farmworkers make it possible."

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

According to the Center for Farmworker Families, between one-third and one-half of all farmworkers in the United States reside in California—an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 farmworkers. The Salinas Valley, often referred to as the "Salad Bowl of the Nation," alone employs more than 50,000 farmworkers. However, this number may be significantly higher due to the challenges of accurately tracking immigrant farmworker populations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in the nation. Common risks include exposure to extreme weather conditions, health issues related to pesticide exposure affecting both farmworkers and their children, and injuries from farm equipment. Despite working in such hazardous conditions, farmworkers often receive minimal benefits and protections.

According to the Author

California's Farmworkers, the essential workers who feed the nation, sustain our state's agricultural industry, and fuel our economy, deserve a holiday that appropriately recognizes and celebrates their achievements. Moving Farmworkers Day from March 31 to August 6 aligns the holiday with National Farmworker Appreciation Day, which was designated by President Bill Clinton in 1994.

Arguments in Support

None on file.

Arguments in Opposition

The California School Employees Association writes, "By moving Farm Workers Day from March 31 to August 6 it will not apply to many classified school employees. While some classified school employees work a 12 month schedule many work 11, 10 or even 9 months, depending on the needs of their position. For classified school employees working less than a full annual year this may cause them to lose a pre-established paid holiday. This will mean some classified school employees will use a vacation day to make up for the holiday, the vacation day would otherwise be paid out upon their resignation or retirement. Establishing fair wages and benefits, including paid holidays, for as many of our members as possible is core to CSEA's mission. We are supportive of the renaming of Cesar Chavez Day but not of the rescheduling of the day to a time of year when many classified school employees (and virtually all teachers) will not benefit."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations analysis,

- 1) Costs of an unknown, but potentially significant amount, in excess of \$150,000, across school districts and community college districts by entitling classified employees to a paid holiday on Farmworkers Day, subject to a memorandum of understanding (MOU), instead of

Cesar Chavez Day (General Fund). Although this bill does not increase the total number of holidays for a classified employee, this bill would impact those districts that previously celebrated Cesar Chavez Day and opt to celebrate Farmworkers Day or not replace the holiday, necessitating changes through the bargaining process.

For example, the California Community Colleges (CCC) notes that August 6 generally falls outside of the academic calendar, as summer sessions usually end prior to the date and fall sessions usually begin after the date, so districts are not likely to designate Farmworkers Day as a local holiday. Impacted districts would need to update MOUs to reflect holiday changes, resulting in workload costs in the low thousands of dollars per district, and certain districts may not be able to comply with this bill until current MOUs expire. There are 73 community college districts and over 900 school districts in California. Additionally, CCC notes that many colleges have set their calendars well in advance of the start of the school year and estimates minor costs to update guidance and other documents related to college holidays.

- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) to update calendars, policies, informational materials, and collective bargaining references to reflect the new holiday date for state employees. It is unknown whether shifting the state holiday from May to August would impact staff workload pressures across state agencies, as the date change may result in more or less efficiencies depending on each agency's operational needs.

Similarly, likely minor and absorbable costs to the Judicial Council to make conforming updates, as existing law requires the courts to close for the March 31 judicial holiday."

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 33-0-7

YES: Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Becker, Hurtado, Niello, Padilla, Stern

ASM GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION: 19-0-3

YES: Blanca Rubio, Davies, Alvarez, Bryan, Chen, Dixon, Fong, Gabriel, Gipson, Macedo, Nguyen, Pacheco, Ramos, Michelle Rodriguez, Solache, Soria, Ta, Valencia, Wallis

ABS, ABST OR NV: Berman, Carrillo, McKinnor

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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