

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 1394 (Gonzalez)
As Amended August 21, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill amends existing statutory provisions to remove references to Cesar Chavez Day, replacing them with the designation of Farmworkers Day for purposes of holiday schedules and employee benefits. This bill further modifies the statutory date for Farmworkers Day, replacing March 31 with March 17, as specified.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes March 17, 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 March 17, known as Farmworkers Day.
- 3) Revises statutory references and provisions applicable to state employees, certain community college employees, and public-school employees to recognize March 17 as Farmworkers Day, as specified. If this bill conflicts with a provision of a collective bargaining agreement entered into by a public school employer and an exclusive bargaining representative before January 1, 2027, those amendments shall not apply until the expiration or renewal of that collective bargaining.
- 4) Requires the Governor to annually proclaim March 17, instead of March 31, as Farmworkers Day, and repeals the proclamation of August 26 as California Farmworker Day.
- 5) Includes language to avoid chaptering issues with SB 1394 of the 2025–26 Regular Session.

COMMENTS

Background.

What problem does this bill solve? 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 continuity, the holiday remained on March 31, while consideration of a different date was deferred. This bill revisits that issue by establishing a date that more appropriately recognizes and celebrates California's farmworkers.

SB 1394 seeks to change Farmworkers Day from March 31 to March 17. This date corresponds to a historic event for the farm labor movement, the start of the Delano Grape Strike March. Marchers travelled from Delano to Sacramento from March 17 to April 10 in 1966. Over 300

miles, the once modest march grew from 70 striking farmworkers to over 10,000 supporters. By the end of the march the first contract with grape growers was signed by farmworkers.

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."

The author states, "Designating Farmworkers Day on a date with immense historical significance to the farmworker labor movement honors farmworkers and is a fitting way to celebrate the thousands of essential workers who sustain California's agricultural industry."

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 approximately one-third of the nation's vegetables and nearly two-thirds of its fruits and nuts. It is estimated that between one-third and one-half of all farmworkers in the United States reside in California, representing approximately 500,000 to 800,000 workers.

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

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 March 17 aligns the holiday with a historic event for the farm labor movement, the start of the Delano Grape Strike March in 1966. Designating Farmworkers Day on a date with immense historical significance to the farmworker labor movement honors our state's tireless farmworkers. 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."

Arguments in Support

The California School Employees Association, AFL-CIO, announced that it is "officially removing our opposition to SB 1394, which would move the state holiday formerly known as Cesar Chavez Day from March 31 to August 6. By changing the new date of Farmworkers Day from August 6 to March 17, our issues with the bill are resolved and we have changed our position to support."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

Unknown.

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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