

1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois recognizes certain dates
3 of the year for honoring specific patriotic, civic, cultural,
4 and historical persons, activities, or events; and

5 WHEREAS, March 31 is the birthday of Cesar E. Chavez,
6 (1927-1993); and

7 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez steadfastly believed that ordinary
8 people can make extraordinary social change when they are
9 individually guided by, and bound together by, universal
10 values and a common vision for a better world; the values he
11 strove for include: service to others, sacrifice, a
12 preference to help the most needy, determination,
13 non-violence, tolerance, respect for life, celebrating
14 community, knowledge and innovation; and

15 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez began his labor career in the early
16 1950s as an organizer for the Community Service Organization
17 (CSO); his work for the CSO included coordinating voter
18 registration drives, battling racial and economic
19 discrimination against Chicano residents, and organizing new
20 chapters of the CSO in California and Arizona; he went on to
21 serve as national director of the CSO in the late 1950s and
22 early 1960s; and

23 WHEREAS, After failing to convince the CSO to help
24 migrant farm workers in their union organizing efforts, he
25 quit his job with the CSO and founded the National Farm
26 Workers Association (NFWA); in 1965, the NFWA, with 1,200
27 member families, joined an AFL-CIO-sponsored union in a
28 strike against Delano growers; in 1966, the two unions merged
29 to form the United Farm Workers (UFW); in 1968, he conducted
30 a 25-day fast to reaffirm the UFW's commitment to
31 non-violence; the NFW's boycott against grape growers
32 persuaded the growers to sign contracts with the UFW in 1970;

1 however, after contract renegotiations in 1973, the growers
2 signed contracts with the Teamsters; the farm workers
3 objected to the Teamster contract, and more than 10,000 of
4 them walked off their jobs; and

5 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez then called for a world-wide
6 boycott of grapes; by 1975, a poll showed that 17 million
7 Americans supported the boycott; the boycott persuaded
8 growers to support the 1975 California Agricultural Labor
9 Relations Act; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1982, Republican George Deukmajian was
11 elected Governor of California; under Governor Deukmajian's
12 leadership, the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board
13 ceased to enforce the Agricultural Labor Relations Act; in
14 1988, Cesar Chavez conducted a 36-day "Fast for Life" to
15 protest the pesticide poisoning of farm workers; and

16 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez died in 1993; in 1994, President
17 Clinton posthumously awarded him the Presidential Medal of
18 Freedom; he became the second Mexican-American to receive
19 this award; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1994, the family of Cesar Chavez and the
21 officers of the United Farm Workers created the Cesar E.
22 Chavez Foundation to "inspire current and future generations
23 by promoting the ideals of Cesar Chavez's life"; and

24 WHEREAS, Cesar Chavez spent 31 years forging a legacy of
25 service, conviction and principled leadership that served as
26 a beacon for Americans; therefore, be it

27 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
28 NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
29 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we recognize March 31 as Cesar
30 Chavez Day in Illinois and encourage public and private
31 entities throughout the State to celebrate the birthday of

1 this great man.