

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 213

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 159

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 213—Relative to Filipino farmworkers.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 26, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 213, Wiggins. Filipino farmworkers.

This measure would recognize the contributions made by Filipino labor leaders and farmworkers to the farmworker movement over the past 80 years in California and the United States.

WHEREAS, Filipino farmworkers have contributed invaluable to the farmworker movement and to the creation and accomplishments of the United Farm Workers in California and throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, Through the recruitment efforts of employers, at the turn of the twentieth century Filipino men first began to leave their homeland for Hawaii to work in the sugar and pineapple fields; and

WHEREAS, During the first 30 years of the twentieth century, over 100,000 men left the Philippines by steamboat for Hawaii and for the mainland United States to ports in Seattle and San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, Despite the passage of the United States Immigration Act of 1924 that barred Asian immigration, many employers, primarily farmers and canneries, began aggressively recruiting Filipino men as a source of cheap labor because Filipinos were classified as United States nationals, not aliens, and were therefore exempt from the provisions of the act; and

WHEREAS, The aggressive recruitment efforts by California employers increased the Filipino population from five people in 1900 to over 30,000 people by 1930; and

WHEREAS, By 1930, Filipino farmworkers made up approximately 15 percent of all California farmworkers, nearly all asparagus farmworkers in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys, and approximately 80 percent of the Salinas Valley lettuce crop workers; and

WHEREAS, Decades before the creation of the United Farm Workers, Filipino farmworkers pioneered and built a farmworker movement beginning in 1919 when Pablo Manlapit led a successful strike in the Hawaiian sugar plantations demanding higher wages and an eight-hour work day; and

WHEREAS, In the 1930s, Filipino laborers in California began aggressively organizing unions and associations such as the Filipino Labor Association of Stockton, the Filipino United Labor Economic Endeavor, the Filipino Labor Union, and the Agricultural Workers League, to improve the working conditions of all farm and cannery workers; and

WHEREAS, In 1933, Rufo Canete and other Filipino labor leaders such as D.L. Marcuelo, Johnny Estigoy, Nick Losado, and others established the Filipino Labor Union and launched one of the first large-scale agricultural strikes in California history by organizing 7,000 farmworkers of all nationalities in the lettuce fields in the Salinas Valley; and

WHEREAS, In 1938, Filipino labor leaders Francisco Varona, Macario Bautista, Lamberto Malinab, and others changed the name of the Filipino Agricultural Laborers Association to the Federated Agricultural Laborers Association to represent a more inclusive union, and in 1939 led a successful strike of the California asparagus industry, which led to similar victories in California that year in the celery, brussels sprouts, and garlic fields; and

WHEREAS, By 1940, the Federated Agricultural Laborers Association was comprised of over 30,000 members; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, Chris Mensalvas, president of the Cannery Workers Union, ILWU Local 37, along with Ernesto Mangaoang, organized the first major agricultural strike after World War II that encompassed the asparagus fields in Stockton, Elton, Byron, and Tracy; and

WHEREAS, Filipino labor leaders such as Larry Dulay Itliong, Andy Imutan, Philip Vera Cruz, and Pete Velasco helped form the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee; and

WHEREAS, Under the leadership of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, Filipino farmworkers initiated the famous five-year strike in the Delano grape fields on September 8, 1965, which would become the most important date in the history of the farmworker movement in California and the United States; and

WHEREAS, In August 1966, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, under the leadership of Larry Dulay Itliong, and the National Farm Workers Association, under the leadership of Cesar Chavez, merged and formed the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO; and

WHEREAS, Filipino labor leaders Larry Dulay Itliong, Andy Imutan, Philip Vera Cruz, Pete Velasco, and countless others have all greatly contributed to the historic formation of the United Farm Workers and the accomplishments of the union such as the passage of the California



Labor Relations Act in 1975, collective bargaining agreements between farmworkers and growers, higher wages, lunch breaks, rest breaks during the workday, unemployment insurance, health insurance, retirement benefits, clean drinking water, access to portable toilets, and protection against pesticides; and

WHEREAS, Filipino labor leaders such as Rufo Canete, D.L. Marcuelo, Johnny Estigoy, Nick Losado, Francisco Varona, Macario Bautista, Lamberto Malinab, Chris Mensalvas, Ernesto Mangaoang, Larry Dulay Itliong, Andy Imutan, Philip Vera Cruz, and Pete Velasco have been often overlooked but nevertheless contributed invaluable and enormously to the farm labor movement in California and the United States; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California recognizes the considerable contribution made by Filipino labor leaders and farmworkers to the farmworker movement over the past 80 years in California and the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

