

Teresa Romero

Biography

In 2018, Teresa Romero became the first Latina president of the United Farm Workers (UFW) and first immigrant woman to head a national labor union. She was born into a large family of Spanish and indigenous Zapotec ancestry in Mexico City and grew up in Guadalajara. Her father, who worked for a tortilla machine manufacturer, and her mother, a homemaker, made sure that all six of their children were educated.

Romero achieved success with her own construction management consulting business and she also managed a law firm that assisted farmworkers and others with immigration and compensation claims. When the 2008 financial crisis occurred, Romero took what was supposed to be a temporary job as an assistant to the president of the UFW. Co-founded in 1962 by Cesar Chavez, the California-based UFW is the nation's oldest farmworkers labor union.

During her time with the UFW, the union achieved key victories in California, including the creation of state standards protecting farm workers from extreme heat, and the first state law in the country securing overtime pay after eight hours of work. Romero also successfully fundraised to build a modern, nearly 11,000-square foot facility in Salinas, CA, to better serve union members and educate the public about the UFW's history and work.

Romero has also made comprehensive immigration reform one of the union's top priorities, along with addressing a lack of healthcare options that has become acute as farmworkers are critical to maintaining America's food supply chain during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Romero is leading the UFW's efforts to advocate for protections for agricultural workers across the country. The union is providing farmworkers with public health information in Spanish and indigenous Indian languages, as well as meals and food boxes and personal protective equipment.

Romero is also leading an effort in California to make it easier for farm workers to vote in union elections, modeling legislation after California's successful efforts to make it easier for more Californians to participate in local, state, and federal elections.

Romero served on the Biden 2020 transition team along with Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, and 13 others.