

**Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and
Public Lands**

Legislative Hearing

July 14, 2022

Testimony

5 minutes

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to everyone on the committee for allowing me to appear before you today.

It is a great pleasure to be here to testify in support of my legislation, the **César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park Act**.

To me, this legislation is personal because I have a very personal and deep connection with César Chávez and the movement that he led.

I grew up in the barrios of Coachella.

My parents were farmworkers who toiled in the fields, day-in, and day-out, with calloused hands and tired backs to give us – my brother, my sister, and I – a better life.

I went to Coachella Valley High School, and I remember seeing César Chávez as he organized our parents.

I remember the hope that he brought to the people I knew.

To my family.

La esperanza para todos los trabajadores agrícolas.

In fact, I remember watching him obtain his first victory for farmworkers **in my district in** Coachella in the 1970s.

His dedication to improving the lives of farmworkers and their families in the Coachella Valley and across the nation was an inspiration.

Every day, he inspired me to give back to the community that had given so much to me.

In college at UCLA and later at Harvard Medical School, I had a poster with his picture that hung on my wall.

On it read his quote: “The end of all education should surely be service to others.”

That was my motivation then.

And it is my motivation today.

That is the reason why I introduced this legislation with Senator Padilla, so we can tell his story so that future generations may come to know it and be inspired.

About the Bill

Our bill will create the **César Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park** and the **Farmworker Peregrinación National Historic Trail**.

This legislation will expand the current César Chávez National Monument, La Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz in Keene, California to two new additional sites.

These sites were carefully chosen from the 2013 National Park Service's Special Resource Study, which recommended that Congress establish a National Historic Park with sites significant to the life of Cesar Chavez.

And each piece of this national park and trail would tell a piece of his story and the farmworker movement he pioneered.

The proposed National Park includes the Forty Acres in Delano, California, which was the first permanent headquarters of the United Farm Workers of America.

The National Park includes the Santa Rita Center in Phoenix, Arizona where César Chávez fasted for **24 days** to protest the State of Arizona's legislation limit farmworker rights during harvest season.

And the legislation creates a National Historic Trail, the **Farmworker Peregrinación National Historic Trail**, based on the 1966 march from Delano to Sacramento, where farmworkers marched for 300 miles for better conditions and a fairer contract.

These sites are critical to tell Cesar Chavez's story, the story of everyone who worked to ensure better conditions and stronger rights for farmworkers, and the story that inspired millions of people.

National Parks as Storytellers

However, this legislation does more than simply tell the story of Cesar Chavez and the farmworker movement.

Too few national parks tell the story of women, minority groups, or other marginalized groups.

Yet these groups made America the country it is today, and these groups helped create the American dream for so many of us.

The National Park Service is America's storyteller, and the stories it tells should reflect the diversity and beauty of our country.

My bill will help bring us closer to this by telling the story of Cesar Chavez and everyone who worked to improve the lives of farmworkers.

With that, I thank you for inviting me here today,
and I urge swift consideration of my bill.

Si se puede.