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AB-2644 Dolores Huerta Day. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Bill No. 2644

CHAPTER 130

An act to add Section 37222.20 to the Education Code, and to add Section 6729 to the Government Code, relating to Dolores Huerta Day.

[Approved by Governor July 18, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State July 18, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2644, Reyes. Dolores Huerta Day.

Existing law requires the Governor to proclaim certain days each year for specified reasons. Existing law also designates particular days each year as having special significance and encourages all public schools and educational institutions to observe those days and to conduct suitable commemorative exercises on those days.

This bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim April 10 as Dolores Huerta Day, would designate and set apart that date each year as having special significance, and would encourage all public schools and educational institutions to observe that date by conducting exercises remembering the life of Dolores Huerta and recognizing her accomplishments and the contributions she made to the state.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Activist and labor leader Dolores Huerta has worked her entire life to improve social and economic conditions for farmworkers, is a leader in the fight against discrimination, and is a defender of civil rights, equal rights, and dignity for all.

(b) Dolores Huerta was born Dolores Clara Fernández on April 10, 1930, in Dawson, New Mexico.

(c) Dolores Huerta's father, Juan Fernández, a farmworker and miner by trade, was a union activist who ran for political office and won a seat in the New Mexico State Legislature in 1938. Dolores Huerta's mother, Alicia Fernández, had an independent and entrepreneurial spirit and was active in numerous civic organizations and the church. She used her 70-room hotel to provide housing to low-wage workers.

(d) Dolores Huerta spent most of her childhood and early adult life in Stockton, California, with her two brothers and their mother, following her parents' divorce.

(e) While Dolores Huerta was a student at Stockton High School, she was active in numerous school clubs and the Girl Scouts. Upon graduating she earned a provisional teaching credential. She taught until she could no longer bear to see her students

come to school with empty stomachs and bare feet, and thus began her lifelong journey of working to correct economic injustice.

(f) Dolores Huerta found her calling as an organizer while serving in the leadership of the Stockton chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO), and founded the Agricultural Workers Association. She set up voter registration drives and pressed local governments for barrio improvements.

(g) During this time, Dolores Huerta met César Chávez, a fellow CSO official, who had become its director.

(h) In 1962, both Dolores Huerta and César Chávez lobbied to have the CSO expand its efforts to help farmworkers, but the organization was only focused on urban issues.

(i) As a result, César Chavez and Dolores Huerta resigned from the CSO, and cofounded the National Farm Workers Association. Dolores Huerta's organizing skills were essential to the growth of the association.

(j) The two made a great team. César Chávez was the dynamic leader and speaker, while Dolores Huerta was the skilled organizer and tough negotiator.

(k) Dolores Huerta overcame the many challenges she faced as a woman. She remained the most talented negotiator securing services for farmworkers in California in 1963 in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children and disability insurance, an unparalleled feat of the times.

(l) The Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee was an integral part of the farmworkers original organizing, and was formed by Filipino workers. The Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee was led by Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz, Pete Velasco, and Andy Imutan, all of whom were instrumental to the farm labor movement.

(m) In 1965, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee and the National Farm Workers Association combined to become the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, later known as the United Farm Workers (UFW). That year, the union took on the Coachella Valley grape growers.

(n) Dolores Huerta was also instrumental in the enactment of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. This was the first law of its kind in the United States, granting farmworkers in California the right to collectively organize and bargain for better wages and working conditions.

(o) While the farmworkers lacked financial capital, they were able to wield significant economic power through hugely successful boycotts and at the ballot box with grassroots campaigning. As the principal legislative advocate, Dolores Huerta became one of the UFW's most visible spokespersons. Robert F. Kennedy acknowledged her help in winning the 1968 California Democratic Presidential primary, moments before he was shot in Los Angeles.

(p) Dolores Huerta advocated for the entire family's participation in the movement because of the involvement of men, women, and children together in the fields picking, thinning, and hoeing. Thus, the practice of nonviolence was not only a philosophy but a very necessary approach in providing for the safety of all. Nonetheless, her life and the safety of those around her were in jeopardy on countless occasions.

(q) During the 1980s, Dolores Huerta served as vice president of the UFW and cofounded the UFW's radio station. She continued to speak for a variety of causes, advocating for a comprehensive immigration policy and better health conditions for farmworkers.

(r) The most widely-known phrase "Sí se puede" was a phrase first used by Dolores Huerta in the farmworker movement.

(s) In 1988, at age 58, she nearly lost her life when she was beaten by San Francisco police at a rally protesting the policies of then-presidential candidate George H. W. Bush. She suffered four broken ribs and a ruptured spleen.

(t) Public outrage resulted in the San Francisco Police Department changing its policies regarding crowd control and police discipline.

(u) Following a lengthy recovery, Dolores Huerta took a leave of absence from the union to focus on women's rights, traveling the country for two years on behalf of the Feminist Majority, encouraging Latinas to run for office. The campaign resulted in a significant increase in the number of women representatives at the local, state, and federal levels.

(v) At age 83, Dolores Huerta continues to work tirelessly, developing leaders and advocating for the working poor, women, and children. As founder and president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, she travels across the country advocating in campaigns and legislation that support equality and defend civil rights. She continues to be a voice for social justice and public policy.

(w) Dolores Huerta continues to lecture and speak out on a variety of social issues involving immigration, income inequality, and the rights of women and Latinos.

(x) Dolores Huerta teaches the concept of personal power that needs to be coupled with responsibility and cooperation to create the changes needed to improve the lives of the working poor.

(y) Dolores Huerta has been honored for her work as a fierce advocate for farmworkers, immigrants, the working poor, and women.

(z) There are four elementary schools in California named after Dolores Huerta, the most recent being the Dolores Huerta International Academy in Fontana, California.

(aa) Dolores Huerta was inducted into the California Hall of Fame in March of 2013. She has received numerous awards, among them: the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award from President Bill Clinton in 1998, Ms. Magazine's One of the Three Most Important Women of 1997, Ladies' Home Journal's 100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century, the Puffin Foundation's Award for Creative Citizenship: Labor Leader Award 1984, the Kern County Woman of The Year Award from the California State Legislature, the Ohtli Award from the Mexican Government, the James Smithson Award of the Smithsonian Institution, and nine honorary doctorates from universities throughout the United States.

(ab) Dolores Huerta received the Ellis Island Medal of Freedom Award and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993. That year proved bittersweet for her as she also experienced the passing of her beloved friend César Chávez.

(ac) In 2012, President Barack Obama bestowed Dolores Huerta with her most prestigious award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States. Upon receiving this award she said, "The freedom of association means that people can come together in organization to fight for solutions to the problems they confront in their communities. The great social justice changes in our country have happened when people came together, organized, and took direct action. It is this right that sustains and nurtures our democracy today. The civil rights movement, the labor movement, the women's movement, and the equality movement for our LGBT brothers and sisters are all manifestations of these rights. I thank President Obama for raising the importance of organizing to the highest level of merit and honor."

(ad) The accomplishments and contributions of Dolores Huerta should be properly memorialized within the history and culture of the United States. Dolores Huerta deserves proper recognition for her numerous sacrifices in the name of justice and the amelioration of severely inadequate working conditions.

SEC. 2. Section 37222.20 is added to the Education Code, to read:

37222.20. (a) April 10 of each year is designated and set apart as Dolores Huerta Day, a day having special significance pursuant to Section 37222.

(b) On Dolores Huerta Day, all public schools and educational institutions are encouraged to conduct exercises remembering the life of Dolores Huerta, recognizing her accomplishments, and familiarizing pupils with the contributions she made to this state.

SEC. 3. Section 6729 is added to the Government Code, to read:

6729. The Governor annually shall proclaim April 10 as Dolores Huerta Day.