

**Before the Board of Supervisors in and for the
County of Monterey, State of California**

Resolution No.:

Adopt Resolution Declaring Bracero Workers History Recognition Week Every Year in Monterey County During the Week of September 17th and Remembering the 62nd Anniversary of the Chualar Bracero Tragedy of 1963.

WHEREAS, In 1942, through a series of diplomatic accords between Mexico and the United States, an executive order called the Mexican Farm Labor Program established the Bracero Program, a program which allowed millions of Mexican guest workers to legally work in the United States on short-term labor contracts, the Bracero Program addressed a national agricultural labor shortage during WWII. A separate Bracero railroad worker program was also established to build and maintain railroad lines throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, On September 17, 1963, in Chualar, California, after a 10-hour shift harvesting celery and other crops, a crew of 57 Bracero farmworkers boarded a makeshift “bus” to return to Earl Meyers Company Labor Camp in Salinas, California where they lived; and

WHEREAS, The makeshift “bus” was nothing more than a flatbed produce truck, rigged with two long parallel wooden benches, an affixed aluminum canopy, and a chain tied on the outside of the back door which kept the farmworkers locked in the compartment; and

WHEREAS, On that day, between 4:20pm and 4:25pm, the makeshift “bus” approached an unmarked railroad crossing eight miles south of Salinas, and not seeing or hearing a train, the driver Francisco “Pancho” Espinosa inched the front wheels of the makeshift “bus” over the railroad tracks; and

WHEREAS, Suddenly, Espinosa heard the whistle of a train, he gunned the motor of the makeshift “bus” trying to quickly get across the tracks, but it was too late. A seventy-one-car Southern Pacific Railroad freight train, traveling at sixty-five miles an hour collided with the makeshift “bus”, tragically killing 32 Bracero farmworkers; and

WHEREAS, The names of the 32 Braceros who tragically lost their lives on this day, included Salvador Olmedo Gallegos, Juan Nunez Valtierra, Antonio Llanes Gonzalez, Alberto Martinez Martinez, Agapito Villafuerte Torres, Victoriano Padilla Sanchez, Margarito Delgado Tinoco, Luis Orozco Contreras, Gonzalo Amador Huerta, Juan Diaz Duenas, Juan Segoviano Roza, Roberto Meza Huerta, Felipe Ramirez Melendrez, Ramon Torres Gutierrez, Jose Angel Olivarez, Jose Delgado Mendoza, Jesus Becerra Acevez, Salvador Cabrera Cholico, Pedro Segura Ramirez, Dolores Matansillas Flores, Silvino Munoz Escobedo, Ramon Navarro Flores, Manuel Maldonado Robles, Loreto Bojorquez Mungaray, Jose Gamez Martinez, Trinidad Mendez Vazquez, Herminio Huerta Tellez, Salomon Guzman Torres, Jesus Mercado Gallardo, Sixto Robles Urzua, Manuel de Jesus Coronado Lopez and Antonio Gomez Zamora, and hailed from the Mexican states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, Sonora, Zacatecas, Puebla and Michoacan, ranging in age from nineteen to fifty-nine; and

WHEREAS, The remaining 25 Bracero farmworkers were severely injured by splintered floor planks, jagged edges of twisted metal, shattered glass and long harvesting knives; and

WHEREAS, The California Highway Patrol, at the time, deemed the tragic incident as “the biggest single fatal vehicle accident in the history of California.” Mexican American activists and civil rights organizations voiced their opposition to the Bracero Program, pointing out the many dangers and lack of safety measures Braceros were subjected to; backbreaking labor, low quality food, lack of water, inadequate rest breaks, and substandard housing that led Braceros to frequently suffer from respiratory illnesses, permanent spinal injuries, malnourishment, and the mental effects of isolation; and

WHEREAS, The renowned Mexican American labor organizer and professor Ernesto Galarza was appointed by Congress, though Committee on Education and Labor Chair Adam Clayton Powell Jr., to investigate the accident and his 72-page report was published on April 1964 and a book was later written, *Tragedy at Chualar*, in 1977; and

WHEREAS, The Chualar Bus crash was a determining factor in the decision by Congress to terminate the program in 1964. The Bracero Program had lasted for more than twenty years, granting a total of 4.8 to 5.2 million labor contracts in all regions of the United States; and

WHEREAS, In September 2013, a stretch of Highway 101 in the Salinas Valley was dedicated to honor the 32 Bracero farmworkers who died in the fatal crash 50 years earlier, the signs for the Bracero Highway in Chualar memorializes the victims and pays tribute to them; and

WHEREAS, September 17, 2025, marks the 62nd Anniversary of the Chualar Bus Crash that tragically killed 32 Bracero farmworkers and injured 25 additional workers; and

WHEREAS, Bracero workers from 1942 to 1964 contributed immensely to the nation’s agricultural and railroad industries and to our nation’s economy. Thousands of Braceros would eventually return to the Salinas Valley and establish their lives and families here. Today, thousands of Monterey County families have fathers and grandfathers who were original Braceros workers of that era, but their contributions had never been officially recognized by any level of government until the Monterey County Board of Supervisors took action in 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the County of Monterey Board of Supervisors, on behalf of the County and all residents thereof, hereby declares once again Bracero Worker History Recognition Week every week of September 17th and remembers the 60th Anniversary of the Chualar Bracero Tragedy of 1963 where 32 Mexican workers tragically lost their lives and 25 injured workers survived.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Monterey County Board of Supervisors hereby encourages all our residents to learn about the significant contributions and legacy of Bracero workers to the agricultural industry in the Salinas Valley and throughout our nation, and we once again celebrate and honor our county’s original Bracero workers who set the foundation for future generations of Latino families and leaders in Monterey County and beyond.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2025, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

I, Valerie Ralph, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey, State of California, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of an original order of said Board of Supervisors duly made and entered in the minutes thereof of Minute Book _____ for the meeting on _____, 2025.

Dated:

Valerie Ralph, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of Monterey, State of California.

By _____
Deputy