

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

**Resolution No.:**

Adopt Resolution Recognizing and Celebrating the **40th Anniversary of the Watsonville Cannery Strikes of 1985-1987**, the Longest and Most Significant Cannery Strike in United States History

**WHEREAS**, Beginning on September 9, 1985, in the “Frozen Food Capital of the World,” more than 1,750 workers, primarily Mexican women at Watsonville Canning and later Richard A. Shaw, Inc., and members of Teamsters Local 912, walked out in protest after their employers demanded drastic cuts to wages, pensions, healthcare, and seniority rights, including an outrageous forty percent reduction in pay, the elimination of union dues check-off, and severe cuts to health benefits. Watsonville Canning owner Mort Console secured an \$18 million loan from Wells Fargo to sustain the company during the strike; and

**WHEREAS**, In October 1985, the strikers overwhelmingly rejected a \$5.05 per hour offer by a vote of 800-1, established a Strikers’ Committee to represent their interests, and drew more than 3,000 people to a support rally on October 6, 1985; and

**WHEREAS**, Despite facing 18 months of extreme hardship, including evictions, financial distress, and immense pressure from powerful interests, the strikers never broke their solidarity, forming rank-and-file leadership and sustaining their movement against overwhelming odds; and

**WHEREAS**, The Watsonville Cannery Strikes became a rallying cry for the national labor movement, the Latino community, and working-class families across the country, drawing widespread attention and support, including a mass rally with Reverend Jesse Jackson on June 29, 1986, that brought 4,000 supporters to Watsonville; and

**WHEREAS**, The resolute strikers demonstrated extraordinary courage, resilience, and perseverance, but their solidarity came at a tremendous cost, as dozens of families faced eviction and many others lost their homes. The strikers even urged the Watsonville City Council to adopt a moratorium on evictions but were unjustly denied; and

**WHEREAS**, In September 1986, Mort Console temporarily shut down operations, sustained by another Wells Fargo loan, and the plant closed again in December amid rumors of a sale. In January 1987, workers and supporters launched protests and pickets at Wells Fargo branches for its role in financing the strike; and

**WHEREAS**, After enduring plant shutdowns, legal challenges, and financial sabotage, the strikers achieved a historic victory in February 1987 when new ownership recognized their union, restored union protections, reinstated workers to their jobs with full seniority, secured wage parity with the industry standard, granted amnesty to returning strikers, and maintained critical health benefits; and

**WHEREAS**, On March 6, 1987, the strikers delayed ratification of the proposed contract and launched a hunger strike to demand stronger protections; and

**WHEREAS**, The strike officially ended on March 11, 1987, when the workers ratified a new contract by a resounding 543-21 vote, forever cementing their struggle as a defining moment in the fight for economic and social justice in California and the United States; and

**WHEREAS,** The Watsonville Cannery Strikes remain a testament to the unbreakable spirit of a working-class Latino community that stood firmly against injustice, never backed down in the face of adversity, and today symbolize the resilience and strength of the people of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the County of Monterey Board of Supervisors, on behalf of our county and all our residents thereof, proudly commemorates the **40th Anniversary of the Watsonville Cannery Strikes of 1985-1987**, expresses its deepest gratitude to all the strikers and their families. We honor their courage, sacrifices, and lasting contributions to the cause of labor and civil rights, social justice and the demand for a better future for the next generations of Watsonville and Pajaro Valley families.

**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