News

Swift and widespread, efforts to rebrand César Chavez Day are



A César Chavez street sign is shown in San Francisco, March 18, 2026. AP PHOTO/JEFF CHIU

From California to Minnesota, elected leaders and civil rights groups are scrambling to distance themselves from César Chavez's name in the wake of allegations that he sexually abused women and girls during the 1960s as he became the face of the farmworkers' movement.

Efforts have been swift and widespread to rebrand events ahead of what typically was a day to celebrate the life and legacy of the Latino rights advocate on his birthday, March 31.

In Tucson, Arizona, last weekend's celebration was instead billed as a community and labor fair. In Grand Junction, Colorado, it's now the Sí, Se Puede Celebration. El Paso, Texas, will mark Tuesday as Community and Labor Heritage Day.

Lawmakers in Minnesota voted this week to end the César Chavez holiday in their state, while California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday signed a bill to rename César Chavez Day as Farmworkers Day. In Colorado, lawmakers were considering a bill to rename the voluntary state holiday there to Farm Workers Day.

Renaming efforts also are underway for dozens of schools, streets and other locations across the United States that are named for Chavez, including the national monument in Keene, California.

The resulting conversations have been anything but easy as supporters grapple with conflicted feelings while sorting out how best to honor what was a pivotal labor and civil rights effort in the United States.

A betrayal

Feelings of disappointment, disbelief and even anger have made for an emotional cocktail for those charting the path forward.

The New York Times recently reported that it found César Chavez groomed and sexually abused young girls who worked in the movement. The movement's co-founder, Dolores Huerta, also revealed that she was a victim of the abuse in her 30s.

"It was a personal hurt and a betrayal," said Jose Luis Chavez, founder and president of the committee that has organized the César Chavez Celebration for Mesa County, Colorado, for the past decade. The committee is made up of people who have worked in the agricultural industry and whose grandparents and parents cut grapes and picked peaches.

"I think that's what my committee was feeling, and I think when we look at our community here, that is what people are still feeling," said Jose Luis Chavez, who is not related to the famous civil rights leader. "They're feeling a lot of hurt and a lot anger."

Born from a desire to educate students about marginalized communities, the annual celebration in Grand Junction has evolved into a gathering with music, food, classic cars and high school students taking the stage to accept scholarships.

Canceling it simply wasn't an option, Jose Luis Chavez said.

The logo was adjusted to include the words "Sí, se puede" — the rallying cry coined by Huerta that translates as "Yes, it can be done." A flurry of social media posts let people know the event would go on under a new name.

Finding a broader focus

The annual César Chavez and Dolores Huerta March and Rally in Tucson was scaled back and rebranded. There was no march or car show last weekend and it was billed instead as the Comunidad y Labor Unity Fair, focusing more broadly on labor rights without mentioning Chavez.

Organizers with the Arizona César E. Chávez + Dolores Huerta Holiday Coalition encouraged supporters of the movement to continue showing up for one another.

"Even when we thought about canceling, we chose to keep going, because this movement is bigger than a name or one person," the group said in a social media post. "No single individual defines it. ... We, the working people, do."

It's a chorus that has resonated loudly and consistently since the allegations became public. While there have been calls in Texas and elsewhere to remove the holiday altogether, the groups that are pushing ahead are driven by a sense of duty to the overall legacy of the movement.

Sehila Mota Casper, executive director of Latinos in Heritage Conservation, said the outcome will be different for every community.

"It's due process that's needed to help grapple with this," she said. "I think that's the best resolution that each community will have to decide for themselves, how it is that they land on a decision that best reflects their community and their values."

A time for listening

The annual march in Albuquerque was canceled long before the news broke and for unrelated reasons, but New Mexico's largest city is just beginning the process of sorting out name changes for roads and other public spaces.

It's a complex process that will take time and involve public outreach, said City Councilor Joaquín Baca, whose district includes roads named after both César Chavez and Huerta. Even Baca and his family still are contemplating the fate of a César Chavez and Dolores Huerta poster that hangs in their home.

The emails, phone calls and text messages that have poured in to city leaders include demands that everything related to César Chavez be torn down, as well as requests that a broader brush be used to recognize the rights of farmworkers and other laborers, Baca said.

"It's every side on every issue within the context of this," he said. "So for me, it has been a lot of listening at this point."

Mota Casper, who has built a career in heritage tourism and historic preservation, said it's a chance for elected leaders and policymakers to pause and consider expanding the narrative around Chavez's legacy. She said society has a responsibility to tell "that full story," understanding that humans are complex and fallible.

"So in commemorating or glorifying them, we have to be able to acknowledge the good and the bad and take that as it comes ... but also understand that we can't gloss over history," she said. "We can't simplify it just to make it easy. We have to be able to talk about it."

CT challenges EPA recission of endangerment finding

by Jenna Outcalt
NEWS EDITOR
SHE/HER/HERS
jenna.outcalt@uconn.edu

Connecticut and 36 other parties filed a petition on March 19 to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rescission of the endangerment finding, a landmark study that served as the basis for the EPA's regulation of harmful greenhouse gases.

The EPA announced it would repeal the finding on Feb. 12, garnering immediate criticism from Connecticut officials, including Gov. Ned Lamont and Attorney General William Tong. Tong indicated at the time that the state would soon take legal action against the decision.

Tong said in a press release that Connecticut was "going to fight with everything we've got" against the EPA's actions.

"The Trump EPA has ignored the law and ignored the science in its reckless rush to fulfill the wishes of the fossil fuel industry. Rescinding the Endangerment Finding means bigger profits for the world's biggest polluters, while the rest of us are left more vulnerable to extreme weather, extreme heat and rising sea levels," he said.

The legal petition includes 24 states and 12 counties or cities as co-petitioners. It asks that the court review the actions of the EPA and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin concerning the endangerment finding.

Katie Dykes, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection commissioner, said in the press release that Connecticut "will step up to do what it can to prevent the worst impacts of climate change while also investing in resilience and disaster recovery."

"The Endangerment Finding was a well-reasoned, scientifically sound decision that validated something we're seeing firsthand: climate change is impacting our public health and safety today while imposing significant and increasing costs on Connecticut residents," Dykes said. "To deny that reality increases the vulnerability of our state to these impacts today, and for future generations. Wildfires, historic flooding, cold snaps and heat waves — these are no longer rare events; they're our new normal."

The 2009 study established that there is "compelling support for finding that greenhouse gas air pollution endangers the public welfare of both current and future generations."

"The risk and the severity of adverse impacts on public welfare are expected to increase over time," the report said.

The endangerment finding did not impose any legislation by itself but rather acted as a prerequisite for EPA regulation of vehicle emissions, according to the EPA website.

In the press release from the EPA, Zeldin said the administration was "eliminating both the Obama-era 2009 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Endangerment Finding and all subsequent federal GHG emission standards for all vehicles and engines of model years 2012 to 2027 and beyond. The action also eliminates all off-cycle credits, including for the almost universally hated start-stop feature."

"The Trump EPA is strictly following the letter of the law, returning commonsense to policy, delivering consumer choice to Americans and advancing the American Dream," Zeldin said in the press release.

However, Tong's office said the decision was based on "flawed interpretations of the law."

"The rescission also ignores decades of peer-reviewed scientific evidence confirming the reality and severity of climate change," the press release stated. "By eliminating all existing and future federal vehicle greenhouse gas emission standards, the rule violates EPA's legal obligations, fundamental principles of administrative law, and its mission to protect public health and welfare."


Plumes of smoke rise out of several factory chimneys. The Endangerment Finding established evidence that greenhouse gas emissions pose a public health risk PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

The Daily Campus

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