



UNITED FARM WORKERS

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March 30, 2015

San Francisco Board of Supervisors
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: File No, 150126 No. ____, "Resolution supporting Gerawan farm workers their right to be represented by the United Farm Workers, and urging Gerawan Farming to implement the terms of their contract."

To the members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

Earlier today, you received a letter from Dan Gerawan, co-owner of Gerawan Farming, urging you to vote against Supervisor David Campos' above-noted resolution. I now write to you on behalf of the United Farm Workers of America, urging you to disregard Mr. Gerawan's letter.

Mr. Gerawan claims that the UFW "completely abandoned" Gerawan workers for over twenty years. This claim is *false*. For over twenty years, the UFW has marched side-by-side with Gerawan workers in achieving great victories for farmworkers at state and national level, in areas such as workplace health and safety, labor, and immigration. To date, the ALRB recognizes the UFW as certified bargaining representative of Gerawan's non-supervisory agricultural workers. As such, we will continue fighting so that Gerawan workers can enjoy the benefits of a union contract.

We invite the Board to look at the true history of this labor struggle. After voting for the UFW in 1990, workers' attempts to obtain a union contract were repeatedly thwarted by the Gerawans. The Gerawans fired workers and their employer provided housing was closed by the Gerawans in retaliation for early organizing efforts. Workers tried organizing again after Gov. Gray Davis signed a landmark 2002 mandatory mediation law letting neutral state mediators hammer out contracts when growers refuse to sign them. Workers again organized for a contract after Gov. Brown signed a 2011 measure with new remedies when employers retaliate for union activities. Finally, in 2013, a neutral state mediator selected by the Gerawans issued a contract that was approved by the ALRB. The Gerawans are avoiding millions of dollars in pay increases and other benefits by refusing to implement the contract.

Mr. Gerawan also claims that his employees have "earned the industry's highest wages since long before" the UFW's renewed request for contract negotiations in 2012, and that Gerawan employees "would earn less" under the union contract. These claims are *false*. Again, we invite the Board to look at the facts. Gerawan did not pay many workers above the state minimum wage until after 2010. Since the UFW's renewed request for negotiations and due to the UFW's



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efforts, Gerawan employees have received substantial wage increases. But even with those recent wage increases, the company still owes many Gerawan workers close to \$1,800 in wage increases and other benefits *each*. Again, Gerawan Farming is avoiding millions of dollars in pay increases and other benefits by refusing to honor the union contract.

Since the 1960's, growers have always made the same types of claims against the UFW. They say that the UFW is imposing itself on workers without their consent, that a union contract is unnecessary because they pay high wages, or that a union is unnecessary because the employer already has the workers' best interests in mind. For over fifty years, employers have made every type of false claim in order to avoid union representation for farmworkers. Here we are in 2015, and the song remains the same. The truth is that for over fifty years, the UFW has stood on the side of farmworkers, fighting for better working conditions in the fields, and representing farmworkers using the power of a union contract.

Tomorrow is Cesar Chavez Day. Tomorrow you will debate and vote on a resolution telling Gerawan, one of America's largest tree fruit producers, to honor a union contract issued in 2013 by a neutral mediator and approved by the state of California. As in the days of Cesar Chavez, Gerawan workers are taking their fight for justice out of the Central Valley and into the cities. San Francisco's example can serve as a beacon to cities across the nation. We ask that tomorrow you honor Cesar's legacy by being among the first cities to support the Gerawan workers whose grapes and tree fruit are sold in the City by the Bay.

Sincerely,

Armando Elenes
National Vice-President, UFW