News

A marcher wearing an Our Lady of Guadelupe flag in Sacramento, Calif., stands in front of the

A marcher in Sacramento, Calif., stands in front of the state capitol building Aug. 26, 2022 (CNS photo/Melissa Cedillo)



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Thousands of marchers lined up in a Sacramento park Aug. 26 to finish the last mile of a 23-day farmworker march.

They marched 335 miles, from Delano to Sacramento, urging California Gov. Gavin Newsom to sign a bill to allow farmworkers the right to choose how they would vote in union elections. The march was organized by the United Farm Workers.

Activists and officials from United Farm Workers addressed the crowd and called on the governor to pass the legislation.

Those assembled on the 90-degree day included people of all ages joined by family members, faith groups and representatives of local unions.

Most of the crowd was Latino, and many of the chants were in Spanish. The scene also included many Mexican flags and United Farm Worker flags. People joined alongside marchers by bikes, scooters and truck caravans.

Speakers reminded the crowd that over a third of the country's vegetables and two-thirds of its fruits and nuts are grown in California. They emphasized that the U.S. survives on the labor of California farmworkers and that as the country continues to see a rise in unions and labor justice, farmworkers must not be forgotten.

They also stressed that farmworkers showed up to pick crops during the pandemic, amid wildfires and in record-setting heat.

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The speakers also touched on the significance of the marchers' route.

In 1966, California farmworkers marched from Delano to Sacramento to demand better conditions in the fields in an era marked by grape boycotts.

During the founding of the United Farm Worker, Catholic activists like Cesar Chavez and Dorothy Day were active in the labor movement, and today that Catholic presence remains.

Front and center each day of the march was a large banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Fresno Bishop Joseph V. Brennan and retired Fresno Bishop Armando X. Ochoa blessed the marchers as they walked by.

Before the march started on Aug. 26, marchers attended Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Sacramento celebrated by Bishop Jaime Soto.

The final day of the march, on California's farmworker appreciation day, Gov. Newsom said he would not support the farmworker bill as it currently stands.

In response, the United Farm Workers set up vigils across California starting Aug. 29 demanding support and solidarity for the legislation.