

February 3, 2013  
President Barack Obama  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

I am writing in support of nominating Fred Ross, Sr., to be a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Both Dolores Huerta, former lead organizer for Cesar Chavez (whom Fred Ross, Sr, brought into the organization) and Cruz Reynoso, former Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court, support this nomination (and recommended the idea to Fred Ross's son, Fred Ross, Jr.).

I have spent my whole adult life as an organizer, creating Midwest Academy (a training center for organizers), as founding director of the NAACP National Voter Fund (running a very large get out the vote program in 2000), directing the AFL-CIO's Health Care Campaign, setting up the campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, directing the campaign for the first budget of President Obama, and directing Americans for Financial Reform (that won the Dodd/Frank financial reform bill), among other organizing efforts. So I have a sense of and admire extraordinary organizing. No one in this country has had a greater impact as an organizer than Fred Ross, Sr. And he is a remarkable embodiment of the best values of this country—and the struggle for freedom, justice and democracy.

He mentored both Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez (as they both acknowledged). He worked in the migrant labor camps and with Japanese Americans in internment camps in WWII organizing community support to combat war time hysteria and prejudice. He worked to help newly released internees find employment and housing in both Cleveland and later in San Francisco. He worked in the Barrios of California and with Yaqui Indians in Arizona. He trained many organizers who went on to be leaders in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) in the civil rights movement.

His legacy is enduring. He inspired those organizers he trained. He inspired many to become organizers and dedicate their life to building a better society. He still inspires others who learn about him and about those he touched, like Chavez and Huerta. He has inspired me. The training center for organizers that I founded, Midwest Academy, gave Fred Ross, Sr., our lifetime achievement award (our "Academy Award") in the 1980s. He died in 1992 at the age of 92. The work he cared about goes on and the legacy he inspired endures.

It would be fitting for America to recognize his great contributions with this Presidential Medal of Freedom, continuing the tradition on which our country was founded: working for liberty

and justice for all people. Recognizing the contributions of such a great organizer can pass on the legacy and inspire future generations to organize to change history for the better and to advance those same values.

With appreciation for your consideration of this request,

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