

From: Peter Dreier <dreier@oxy.edu>

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To: [Julie C. Rodriguez@who.eop.gov](mailto:Julie_C_Rodriguez@who.eop.gov)

Subject: Presidential Medal of Freedom for Fred Ross Sr.

Ms. Rodriguez:

I am writing to add my name to the growing list of Americans who are urging President Obama to award posthumously the Presidential Medal of Freedom to organizer Fred Ross Sr.

Toward that goal, today I published an article, "The Grapes of Ross," on *Huffington Post* about Ross and the campaign on his behalf. You can find that article here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/fred-ross-presidential-medal-of-freedom_b_2757989.html

Fred Ross Sr. was a remarkable individual who helped empower ordinary Americans to help our country live up to its ideals. He directly had a huge impact on many individuals, including Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Cong. Ed Roybal, who became well-known public figures. But the "ripple effects" of Ross' more than five decades of activism are even more impressive. He trained and inspired thousands of activists, who in turn trained and inspired tens of thousands more, who in turn trained and inspired millions, in the day-to-day tools of citizenship and civic participation. Most of them are not well-known, but their civic involvement is what makes our democracy work.

I teach courses in community organizing and social movements at Occidental College (which the president attended, although years before I started teaching there). During the 2008 presidential campaign, I did some training in Los Angeles for Camp Obama volunteers. The techniques that the Obama campaign used in that election, and which are now being used in Organizing for Action, come directly from Fred Ross Sr.'s toolkit, including housing meetings and the specific voter registration and GOTV tactics used in both presidential campaigns.

I have written dozens of favorable articles about President Obama over the years, because I believe that he shares my belief in building democracy from the bottom up. I was thrilled to hear him invoke this idea during his recent Inaugural Address.

Now a broad coalition of labor, community, faith, business, civic, academic, and other leaders and rank-and-file Americans have come together to urge President Obama to bestow his much-deserved honor on Fred Ross Sr., which would be a fitting way to translate the stirring words of his Inaugural Address into action. Years from now, historians will remind us that giving this award to Fred Ross Sr. was an important part of President Obama's legacy – a symbolic statement completely in sync with his many great legislative accomplishments and appointments to the bench.

Please relay this message to the President. Thank you.

Thank you.

Peter Dreier

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New book: [The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame](#) (*Nation Books*) -- published July 2012