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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

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President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to encourage you to posthumously award the legendary organizer Fred Ross Sr. the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Fred was a tireless leader, who sought to resolve the greatest social inequalities of his day. His influence extended far beyond the famous house meetings, boycotts and strike committees he organized and continues to live on through the community leaders he mentored and the civic engagement he fostered almost 100 years ago.

Beginning in the 1930s, Fred organized "Dust Bowl" refugees in migratory work camps to help them form camp councils and establish self-governance. From there, Fred built community support to combat Japanese American racial prejudice during World War II. One of his most well-known contributions occurred in the aftermath of World War II, when he organized eight Civic Unity Leagues in California's Citrus Belt to battle segregation in schools. Through his efforts and community support, Fred successfully integrated School Boards across the Citrus Belt through voter registration drives and civic engagement. Later, in the early 1950s, Fred met and became a mentor to Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Together, they led the Community Service Organization (CSO) and passed landmark legislation on behalf of immigrants. During the 1960s and 1970s he trained close to 2,000 grape and lettuce boycott and strike organizers in every major United States city and Toronto, which led to the passage of the historic California Agricultural Labor Relations Act signed into law by California Governor Jerry Brown in 1975.

Fred Ross Sr. has truly made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors," as stipulated by the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Awarding this medal to Mr. Ross posthumously would allow this humble man to gain the recognition he deserves as well as inspire future organizers committed to equality and social justice for all.

Sincerely,



Michael Bennet
United States Senator