

United States Senate

March 20, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to request your favorable consideration of Fred Ross, Sr. for posthumous receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Anyone currently engaged in or seeking a career in public service should look to Mr. Ross's lifetime of work as a model example of how to truly live for others. Activated by his exposure to the destitution and poverty of the Depression era, Mr. Ross chose a much different path than the middle class lifestyle many of his young classmates at the University of Southern California pursued. Instead, Mr. Ross moved to the Dustbowl, as a social worker in the government-run Arvin Migratory Labor Camp. There, he spent his time organizing farmers and laborers, and developing the skills and methods he would use in what became a long career in pursuit of social justice.

His ability to work effectively with a wide variety of groups and causes was notable. After World War II, Mr. Ross provided assistance for Japanese-Americans who had been interned by the United States to find jobs and housing in order to gain their freedom from the camps. He was a staunch advocate of civil rights, battling for the desegregation of schools and public facilities for Mexican Americans and African Americans in Southern California. Working with another legendary community organizer, Saul Alinsky, Mr. Ross promoted the livelihood of immigrants, and fought voter suppression efforts across the state.

Most notably, Mr. Ross was a founding member and fierce advocate for the United Farmworkers Union (UFW). One of the most successful organized labor movements in this nation's history, Mr. Ross's contributions over a decade with UFW not only brought great success to the movement, but trained and inspired many generations after him to be organizers for those causes they held most dear.

For all of his personal achievements, it is the inspiration and guidance his life of public service provides to future generations that remains his most lasting legacy and makes Mr. Ross particularly qualified to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His contributions to society have been especially meritorious, and this remarkable man spent a lifetime serving the national interest of the United States. Therefore, it is without reserve that I express my personal admiration, appreciation and strong support for Mr. Ross's posthumous receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
United States Senate