

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington D.C 20500

February 26, 2013

Dear President Obama

In the early 70's, I was working as a director of religious education in Ellicott City Maryland. It was an attempt to make the world a better place. I became aware of the problems of farmworkers years before in La Junta Colorado. When Pete Velasco came to speak at one of my adult education classes, he impressed me with the need to do more. I started working for the United Farm Workers and soon was in a training class for organizers taught by Fred Ross Sr.

Fred made organizing and victories over difficult odds seem possible. I was thrilled with the new opportunity to make a difference in the world. Over time I worked with Fred many times in campaigns, during my few years with the UFW and thereafter. Fred was an incredible inspiration and the greatest source of organizing talent and experience.

After my stint with the UFW, I returned to my home state of Colorado. I was interested in seeing what I could do for low income people there. I wanted to put together my newly honed organizing experience with my engineering experience (I am a MIT trained engineer). I began researching all I could about the budgets of low income households – Fred was big on making sure you know what you are doing. I decided to concentrate on lowering the energy bills of low income households. Starting from scratch and using the organizing techniques Fred taught, retaught, and mentored me on, I built five different non-profit organizations in Colorado. They all worked around saving energy for the immediate improvement of low income persons' lives and for the sake of future generations.

The low income coop was the biggest challenge. We had house meetings, made personal visits, recruited and trained coop members and volunteers. People in the Hispanic Westside of Denver joined the coop and worked on one another's homes. Insisting on measurable outcomes, a Fred imperative, we were able to demonstrate actual energy savings on utility bills.

After the non-profits were up and running on their own two feet, I began working again with Fred in Neighbor to Neighbor. There we organized across the land to stop aid to the Contras. I was able to train many more organizers with the techniques I learned from Fred. We were also able to use the organizing techniques to elect a progressive Congressional Representative in a difficult district.

Eventually I moved to California where – thanks in a large part to Fred – I was able to start a company that employs 35 people across the United States. The company works to develop and implement energy efficiency programs.

Fred Ross Senior deserves the Presidential Medal of Freedom for all the work he did and his huge legacy of hundreds, maybe thousands of organizers who work to improve the lives of us all.

Thank you

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