



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

March 5, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to ask you to consider awarding Fred Ross Sr. the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was a trailblazing organizer whose innovations and dedication led to some of the labor movement's greatest victories of the latter twentieth century.

Fred cut his teeth as an organizer in the same labor camps that Steinbeck described in *The Grapes of Wrath*. In 1948, he founded the Community Service Organization (CSO) in East Los Angeles. The CSO served as a school for organizers, and its graduates included César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and Cruz Reynoso.

Fred instilled the discipline and focus that these fiery young organizers needed to win equality and fairness—at work, at school, and at the ballot box—for their poor and segregated communities. His success may be measured, in part, by my approval of California's Agricultural Labor Relations Act in 1975, the first law in the nation to extend Wagner Act protections to farmworkers.

I first met Fred in 1972, when I was California Secretary of State. At the time, the national farm bureau was running a dirty campaign to pass a ballot initiative that would have strangled the nascent farmworkers' movement. We worked together to defeat that measure, and I got to see Fred's work up close. I can attest to both his amazing talent for training organizers and his deep commitment to justice and equality.

Fred was a humble man who never would have sought this honor for himself, a quality that makes him all the more deserving of it. Carey McWilliams wrote that Fred "is a man of

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exasperating modesty, the kind that never steps forward to claim his fair share of credit for any enterprise in which he is involved.”

I believe it's time to give Fred the fair share that he worked so hard to get for others.

Respectfully yours,


Edmund G. Brown Jr.