

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

Re: The Nomination of Fred Ross Sr. to Receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Dear President Obama,

We are writing to join the growing chorus of voices from all across the country to encourage you to confer the Presidential Medal of Freedom on the legendary organizer, Fred Ross Sr.

Mr. President, in your recent inaugural address you recognized the iconic struggles for freedom, equality and dignity for all, from Seneca Falls to Selma to Stonewall. We would add, Flint, Michigan and Delano, California, both cornerstones of labor's struggles for basic human dignity.

But our task is unfinished.

Talented and committed organizers play a crucial role in all freedom and justice struggles. They recruit, inspire and train ordinary men and women to stand up for themselves.

Fred Ross Sr. pioneered this work as one of the premier organizers of the twentieth century. He once said, "The duty of the organizer is to provide people with the opportunity to work for what they believe in." In his eulogy for Fred Ross Sr., Cesar Chavez stated, "In addition to training me and inspiring me and being my hero for over forty years, he also became my best friend."

Fred Ross Sr. legacy lives on today. He trained over 2,000 organizers in every major city in the United States and Canada. Even today, more than 20 years after his death, the ranks of 18 international unions and countless social justice movements are filled with Ross-trained organizers.

You and President Clinton have bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and Justice Cruz Reynoso – three of Fred Ross Sr.'s students. It is only fitting that this year, their teacher and mentor be recognized.

Sincerely,

Robert Reich

Hilda Solis