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March 13, 2013

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The President  
The White House

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to urge you to grant the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award posthumously to Fred Ross, Sr. As both a long-time union labor lawyer and civil rights activist, I have seen his legacy in action in big and small ways. On so many occasions in my work over the past 30-plus years, I have come across organizers in the heat of a campaign who reach into their pocket for the axioms crafted by Fred Ross, Sr. Perhaps you had the good fortune to use them yourself in your days as a community organizer. These small nuggets of wisdom teach volumes about organizing.

One of my favorite axioms reads:

“Organizing is providing people with the opportunity to become aware of their own capabilities and potential.”

This axiom embodies who Fred Ross, Sr. was, as well as the work of those whose lives he touched. Fred saw the potential in the organizers he trained as well as people he worked alongside to create social change, be it the creation of a neighborhood park or the right to a job or a quality education. Fred left a legacy in the hundreds, if not thousands, of organizers who he trained and who have gone on to take a stand with community members on issues as diverse as gun control, nuclear proliferation, global warming, civil rights, voting rights, immigrant rights, and of course affording workers, in particular farm workers, dignity and respect in the workplace. The theme all of these efforts have in common is giving working men and women a voice in their local community, their workplace or in the critical issues of our country. The letters that have been sent to you in support of awarding him the Presidential Medal of Freedom are testimony to you of that fact. Fred Ross, Sr.'s significant contributions to the development of our country are also well documented in those letters.

I, however, hold a unique vantage point as to his place in history, as the wife of Fred Ross, Jr. In this role, I have seen the very powerful legacy Fred Ross, Sr. has left. I am sure you know there are those who can talk the talk and those who can walk the

walk. Fred Ross, Sr. did both. Fred left not only a legacy in those whom he trained and worked alongside, but in his own children.

Fred's eldest son, Robert Ross, served as high school teacher at Davis High School in Davis, California for more than 30 years. Before he retired, he was considered the Outstanding Educator of the Year in the Sacramento area. The following are just a few quotes about Rob Ross that give you a flavor of the kind of teacher he was.

"... Mr. Ross is a devoted teacher who truly cares about his students.... Mr. Ross brought American History alive to my class through the use of anecdotes, interesting facts and his many personal stories. Mr. Ross wants his students to understand that American History is more than just names and dates. By understanding the underlying trends that occurred in our nation's history, we can better understand the world we live in today...." "... Mr. Ross is one of the most dedicated, experienced, and enthusiastic teachers I have ever met. Not only did he do a wonderful job at teaching the material, but he also motivated me to learn. Time and time again, he has shown his sincere concern for his students and our community. Not only has he encouraged me to work hard, but also ... to assist underprivileged people in our community...."

Fred Ross, Sr.'s daughter, Julia Ross, is a psychotherapist and director of Recovery Systems, a clinic in California that treats mood, eating and addiction problems with nutrient therapy and biochemical re-balancing. She is one of the most successful and well-known names in nutrient therapy and lectures at conferences and workshops around the world to share her work. She has authored two best selling books, "The Diet Cure" and "The Mood Cure." She has taken lessons from her father regarding the importance of health and fitness, as well as a respect for those who work in the fields and the food they put on our tables. She sees the potential in all her clients regardless of the challenges they have faced in their lives.

Fred Ross, Jr. has followed most closely in his father's footsteps, building on the lessons he taught him as a young man when they worked side by side with the Yaqui Indians, the Robert Kennedy campaign and, of course, with the United Farm Workers, where he worked as an innovative and effective organizer and boycott leader.

Fred Ross, Jr. later served as a public defender. He then returned to organizing in San Francisco and served as Director of Neighbor to Neighbor, a National Grassroots Organization which was a leader in the fight for peace with justice in Central America. There he used the organizing methods honed by his father, and indeed invited him to join him in training a new generation of organizers. Fred Ross, Jr. has spent countless hours on campaigns for voter participation and active citizenship as well as organizing janitorial, healthcare and now electrical workers.

The President  
March 13, 2013  
Page 3

The imprint of Fred Ross, Sr. is best learned from Fred's own words, which he wrote in a foreword to the biography of César Chávez, a copy of which is attached. Fred currently is a union organizer for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1245, as well as on the National Campaign for Immigration Reform. In addition, he is a loving father and husband. Fred and I have two children, ages 10 and 13. It is our goal to pass on this great tradition to them and to imbue in them the importance of standing up in the face of injustice. I am attaching a photo of them in a school play where our son is playing Fred Ross, Sr. and our daughter, Dolores Huerta. Yes, the tradition is being continued.

In the words of Leader Pelosi, "Fred Ross, Sr. left a legacy of good works that have given many the courage of their convictions, the powers of their ideals, and the strength to do heroic deeds on behalf of the common person." I believe that in awarding the Medal of Freedom, you will send a message to our children and all children of our country that you do not need to be a celebrity or seek the limelight and you do not need to be an elected leader or in a position of power to make a difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margo A. Feinberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing "M" and "F".

Margo A. Feinberg

MAF:mlk  
Enclosure