



UFCW LOCAL 770

UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION • www.ufcw770.org

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John M. Grant, Secretary-Treasurer

March 7, 2013

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

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) Local 770, the undersigned write to express our enthusiastic support for the nomination of legendary organizer Fred Ross Sr. to be posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Ross' life embodied all that the medal seeks to honor – "an especially meritorious contribution to the security and national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public and private endeavors."

Ross fought racism, discrimination, and the myriad of injustices confronted by working men and women for five decades. He helped build the labor movement and the bridges between labor, religious, civic, and neighborhood organizations. He was a pioneer in opening doors to women and people of color, encouraging their full participation in leadership roles.

This Union is especially indebted and proud to support Ross' nomination.

In the late 1940s, local Latino leaders appealed to Ross to help them organize the Community Service Organization (CSO). The founding leaders, including members of the Steel Workers, the ILGWU, Meatcutters and the Laborers, formed the core of the early leadership of what became the most effective and militant Latino civil rights organization in the state of California. CSO leaders built a powerful coalition that included the NAACP, the JACL, the Catholic Church, and the Jewish community. Together they fought for fair housing, employment and working conditions.

J.J. Rodriguez, one of the early heads of the Amalgamated Butcher Workman and Meatcutters of North America, Local 563 (which became part of UFCW Local 770), was one of the leaders to come out of the CSO. In fact, Rodriguez later became the President of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, and was one of the highest-ranking Latino labor leaders in America at the time.

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It was Fred Ross who developed and built the CSO, enabling individuals like J.J. Rodriguez to gain the skills and vision which helped to build Local 563 years later.

Ross learned that there are no short cuts. You find people one at a time, teach them to develop their own powerful voices, turn their anger about injustice into hope by encouraging them to take collective action.

Ross taught us that the organizer works quietly behind the scenes, patiently asking questions, listening respectfully, teaching new leaders, pushing them to take action, and creating hope with great enthusiasm.

His goal was "to help people do away with fear - fear to speak up and demand their rights, to push people to get out in front so that they could prove to themselves that they could do it. "

Our country continues to benefit from the legacy of Fred Ross Sr.

Over the past thirty years, the organizing ranks of no fewer than 18 international unions have been filled with Ross trainees, and countless local labor councils and state Federations of Labor.

We urge you to recognize this unsung hero by conferring the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

UFCW LOCAL 770



Ricardo F. Icaza, President



John M. Grant, Secretary-Treasurer

RFI:JMG:jd

Via email to Julie_C_Rodriguez@who.eop.gov