

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AWARD THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM, POSTHUMOUSLY, TO FRED ROSS, SR., FOR HIS MERITORIOUS CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED STATES.

WHEREAS, for nearly half a century, Fred Ross, Sr., educated, agitated and inspired people of all races and backgrounds to overcome fear, despair, oppression and cynicism; and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross, Sr., was a pioneer who fought for racial, social and economic justice; and

WHEREAS, 2012 presidential medal of freedom recipient and native New Mexican Dolores Huerta recognized Fred Ross, Sr., as the organizer who mentored both her and Cesar Chavez; and

WHEREAS, 1994 presidential medal of freedom recipient Cesar Chavez once described his relationship with Fred Ross, Sr., by saying, "I learned quite a bit by studying Gandhi, but the first practical steps I learned from the best organizer I know, Fred Ross, Sr." and "he changed my life"; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of New Mexicans volunteered with the united farm workers of America and experienced excellent organizing training from Fred Ross, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, in the 1930s and early 1940s, Fred Ross, Sr., organized "Dust Bowl" refugees in the migratory worker camps that author John Steinbeck wrote about, helping them form camp

councils and institute self-governance; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1940s, Fred Ross, Sr., worked with Japanese Americans during World War II, organized community support to combat wartime hysteria and prejudice and helped newly released "internees" find employment and housing; and

WHEREAS, after World War II, in the midst of ku klux klan activity, Fred Ross, Sr., organized eight civic unity leagues in California, bringing Mexican Americans and African Americans together to battle segregation in schools, skating rinks and movie theaters; organized parents to fight the practice of segregation in local schools; and successfully integrated school boards through voter registration drives and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, one of the most dramatic outcomes of his work occurred when parents sued the school districts, and prevailed, in the seminal *Mendez et al v. Westminster School District, et al* case, creating, in 1947, the legal precedent for the landmark school desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, Saul Alinsky hired Fred Ross, Sr., to organize the community service organization in Los Angeles, which helped elect as councilman native New Mexican Ed Roybal, who was the first Hispanic to be elected to the Los Angeles city council and who later became a United States congressman, a position he held for thirty years; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1950s, Fred Ross, Sr., became a lifetime mentor to Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, recruiting them to the community service organization, for which they became full-time organizers and helped to overcome voter suppression efforts and pass landmark legislation on behalf of immigrants; and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross, Sr., recruited and trained many other Hispanic leaders, including Cruz Reynoso, who became the first Hispanic supreme court justice in California and received the presidential medal of freedom in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross, Sr., recruited and trained a young farm worker, Eliseo Medina, who dedicated years of his life to the united farm workers of America, became secretary-treasurer for the service employees international union and is currently a leading advocate for comprehensive immigration reform; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, as part of the "War on Poverty", Fred Ross, Sr., trained many of the organizers who went on to be leaders in the student nonviolent coordinating committee and the congress of racial equality in the deep south; and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross, Sr., is most remembered for his work with America's farm workers in their struggle for justice and dignity during the 1960s and 1970s, training close to two thousand grape and lettuce boycott and strike organizers in every major city in the United States and in Toronto, Canada, and galvanizing the collective action that led to the passage

of the historic California Agricultural Labor Relations Act,
signed into law by California Governor Jerry Brown in 1975;
and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross, Sr.'s, enduring legacy is his
dedication as an organizer who helped foster collective
action, citizen engagement and leadership development, all of
which have never been more relevant or important to American
democracy; and

WHEREAS, President Obama's recognition of Fred Ross, Sr.,
would serve as a beacon of hope for living and future
organizers committed to social justice; and

WHEREAS, the presidential medal of freedom recognizes
those individuals who have made an especially meritorious
contribution to the security or national interests of the
United States, to world peace or to cultural or other
significant public or private endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross, Sr., distinguished himself through a
lifetime of service to his country;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that President
Barack Obama be requested to posthumously award the
presidential medal of freedom to Fred Ross, Sr., for his
meritorious contribution to the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this memorial be
transmitted to President Barack Obama.