

March 10-11, 2022

**ITEM 199-2003-R0322**

**Request for Authorization to Award an Honorary Doctorate to Mr. Charles (Chuck) Johnson;  
Montana State University**

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**THAT**

In recognition of many career achievements and the distinction brought to the Montana University System as an alumnus, the Board of Regents grants the Montana State University the authority to confer an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters to Charles Johnson.

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**EXPLANATION**

Mr. Charles "Chuck" Johnson has been one of the most reliable sources of news reporting regarding Montana's government. In his 45 years reporting on Montana politics and government for Montana's largest newspapers and wire services, Chuck Johnson covered 22 legislative sessions, eight governors, nine U.S. senators and 12 U.S. representatives.

His reporting was clear, fair, and balanced and he tackled the toughest, most important issues of Montana's government and its Legislature. He was clearly recognized by other journalists, by legislative staff, by legislators themselves and by members of the executive branch as a walking institution of fairness who doggedly sought to inform the citizens of Montana about how their democracy was working.

Importantly, he always took the time to mentor any young journalist who asked for his help. As such, he became known as the "Dean of Montana Politics," not just for his knowledge, but for his attention to educating the next generations of the Fourth Estate.

For 45 years, the Montana public could take for granted this reliable, fair, indefatigable, and knowledgeable - almost encyclopedic - courier of the news. He was in some ways Montana's version of Walter Cronkite, a trusted presence that everyone knew.

After retiring in 2017, Chuck continued to serve Montana as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Montana Historical Society. He later joined the Montana Free Press Board of Directors, on which he continues to serve. Chuck has helped Montana Free Press - the state's largest member-supported nonprofit news organization - grow from a small, three-person newsroom to a thriving news organization with a staff of ten. Chuck has also been an indispensable resource, alongside Montana Free Press reporters and MSU alumna Sarah Vowell, in developing oral history programming for an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Montana Constitutional Convention to be held at Montana State University in early 2022.

For these and his other contributions, the Board of Regents of Higher Education is pleased to confer the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters at Montana State University to Charles Johnson and wishes him well for many years in the future.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Letter of Nomination from President Cruzado