

March 12, 2026

ITEM 223-2002-R0326

Request for Authorization to Award an Honorary Doctorate to Elizabeth (Betty) McCoy; Montana State University

THAT

In recognition of many career achievements and the distinction brought to the Montana University System, the Board of Regents grants Montana State University the authority to confer an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to Elizabeth (Betty) McCoy.

EXPLANATION

Over a distinguished career spanning more than three decades, Betty dedicated herself to the advancement of youth, education, and community through her work with MSU Extension and Montana 4-H. She began her journey as a 4-H member, earning her bachelor's and master's degrees from MSU. She served as a County Extension Agent, State 4-H Specialist, and as the Montana State 4-H Leader for 16 years. In each of these roles, she demonstrated a deep commitment to the land-grant mission of education, outreach, and service.

Betty's leadership was instrumental in guiding the transition from the State 4-H Office to the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development, a process that required vision, collaboration, and perseverance. This transition, approved by the university and the Board of Regents in 2002, established a model for youth development that has since been emulated by other institutions nationwide.

Her influence extended far beyond Montana. Betty served on several national boards, including the National 4-H Council and the Executive Institute for Fund Development. She was a champion for international education, serving as an International 4-H Youth Exchange delegate to Venezuela and as National Japanese Exchange Chair. Betty believed in the importance of broadening the horizons of Montana's youth and worked tirelessly to create opportunities for international exchange and understanding.

Betty's impact is reflected in the many honors she received, including induction into the National 4-H Hall of Fame in 2018, the National Outstanding International 4-H Youth Exchange Award, the NAE4HA Distinguished Service Award, and the MSU Blue and Gold Award in 2024. She was twice recognized as one of the "Outstanding Young Women of America," and her leadership and service have been celebrated at the local, state, and national levels.

Betty was known for her mentorship, storytelling, and ability to inspire others. She was a trusted advisor to colleagues, volunteers, and youth, and her question, "How do we lift up others and their work?" became a guiding principle for others. Betty's legacy lives on through the programs she built, the people she mentored, and the book she authored, "Past, Present, Possibilities: Exploring 100 Years of Montana 4-H 1912-2012," which preserves the history and values of 4-H for future generations.

Awarding an honorary doctorate to Betty McCoy would be a fitting tribute to a life dedicated to service, leadership, and the betterment of others. It would honor her remarkable contributions to Montana State University, the state of Montana, and the broader field of youth development.

For these and other extraordinary contributions, the Board of Regents is pleased to confer an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters at Montana State University upon Elizabeth (Betty) McCoy.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1: Letter of Nomination from President Tessman