



December 17, 2025

Commissioner Clayton Christian
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
Montana University System
560 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Commissioner Christian,

This is a request for the Montana University System Board of Regents to confirm the recommendation of an honorary degree to Elizabeth (Betty) McCoy, to be awarded at Montana State University's (MSU) commencement ceremony in the Spring 2026. Ms. McCoy was recommended by the MSU Honorary Degree Committee and Faculty Senate leadership voted in favor of this honorary degree recommendation.

Elizabeth (Betty) McCoy (Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters):

Betty McCoy's service to Montana State University and the state is unparalleled. 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 and went on to earn both her bachelor's and master's degrees from MSU. Betty served as a County Extension Agent, State 4-H Specialist, and ultimately as 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 transformative. She 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. Betty's work ensured that the Center became a hub for leadership, networking, and life skills development for Montana's youth.

Her influence extended far beyond Montana. Betty served on several national boards, including the National 4-H Council, which she chaired in 1998-99, 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 deeply in the importance of broadening the horizons of Montana's youth, and she worked tirelessly to create opportunities for international exchange and understanding.

Office of the President

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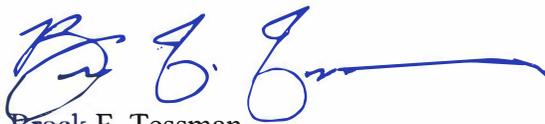
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Betty's impact is reflected in the many honors she received, including induction into the National 4-H Hall of Fame in 2018, the National Outstanding International 4-H Youth Exchange Award, the NAE4HA Distinguished Service Award, and the MSU Blue and 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.

Beyond her professional achievements, Betty was known for her mentorship, her storytelling, and her 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 those who worked with her. 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. More importantly, it would affirm our institution's commitment to recognizing those whose work transcends their lifetime and continues to shape the future.

Sincerely,



Brock F. Tessman
President