



December 2, 2021

Commissioner Clayton Christian
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
560 North Park Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-3201

Dear Commissioner Christian:

This is a request for the Board of Regents to confirm the recommendation of an honorary degree to be awarded at Montana State University's (MSU) commencement ceremonies in Spring of 2022.

The following individual, Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas, was recommended by the Honorary Degree Committee and approved by Faculty Senate.

Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas (Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters)

Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas was born and raised in Bozeman, Montana, where his father was a longtime faculty member at Montana State University. Judge Thomas was educated entirely in Montana schools, most notably an undergraduate at Montana State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications, where he served as a Student Regent to the Montana University System Board of Regents. Following his undergraduate degree from Montana State, he obtained his Juris Doctor from the University of Montana Andrew Blewitt School of Law.

Judge Sidney Thomas was a partner in the Billings firm of Bellingham, Longo and Mather, and served as an adjunct instructor of law at Rocky Mountain College from 1982-1995. Appointed as a judge of the 9th Circuit Court by President Bill Clinton, Judge Thomas was 42 years old when he received his commission on January 4, 1996, to oversee nine western states. As a judge of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge Thomas arranged for 9th circuit hearings to be conducted in Montana. Prior to that, the circuit had held one hearing in Montana's history.

In 2010, President Barack Obama interviewed Judge Thomas as a finalist for an open seat on the United State Supreme Court. He was the only candidate that did not hold a law degree from Harvard, Columbia or Yale, but rather held degrees from state universities in Montana.

Judge Thomas has brought great distinction to Montana State University and the State of Montana. He has served the constituents of Montana, the states within the 9th circuit of appeals and our nation, with dedication and diligence. It would be a tremendous honor to bestow Judge Sid Thomas an honorary degree from Montana State University to honor his exemplary public service.

In closing, Montana State University wholeheartedly supports the recommendation of Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas for an honorary doctorate degree from Montana State University. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration as the students, faculty and staff of Montana State University would be so proud to honor him at our upcoming Spring 2022 commencement ceremonies.

Office of the President

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Sincerely,

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President