

BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER

1. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Nevada State University Honorary Degree Recipient, 2025 Commencement

MEETING DATE: March 6-7, 2025

2. BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Nomination of an individual to receive an honorary degree at 2025 commencement ceremony.

3. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Nevada State University President DeRionne Pollard requests approval to present Jason Frierson with an honorary degree at NSU's 2025 commencement ceremony.

4. IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

Standing item

5. CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:

- Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
- Success (Increase student success)
- Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
- Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce and industry education needs of Nevada)
- Research (Co-develop solutions to the critical issues facing 21st century Nevada and raise the overall research profile)
- Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Jason Frierson is a dedicated public servant, attorney, and community leader who has made a lasting impact on Nevada through his work in law, legislation, and advocacy. As the first African American U.S. Attorney for the District of Nevada and a former Speaker of the Nevada State Assembly, **Frierson** has been a trailblazer in justice reform, public policy, and community engagement. His leadership has strengthened partnerships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, advanced critical legislation on education, healthcare, and civil rights, and championed policies that promote fairness and equity.

6. BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

Jason Frierson: Key Achievements & Contributions

Legal & Public Service Leadership

- **First African American U.S. Attorney for the District of Nevada** – Nominated by President Biden and confirmed by the Senate.
- Led an office of **115 attorneys and staff**, overseeing **Criminal, Civil, and Appellate Divisions**.
- Strengthened **community engagement** and partnerships with **federal and local law enforcement agencies**.
- **Rebranded the U.S. Attorney’s Office** to restore trust and credibility with the judiciary and community.
- Ensured that the office **better reflects the diversity** of the community it serves.

Legislative & Policy Impact

- Served **10 years in the Nevada State Assembly**, including **6 years as Speaker**, becoming the **first African American Speaker in Nevada history**.
- Led **bipartisan collaboration** to pass landmark policies in **criminal justice reform, education, and healthcare**.
- Authored and passed **legislation on elections, foster care, healthcare billing, housing foreclosures, workplace discrimination, and clean energy expansion**.
- Advocated for **public education funding** and worked on policies expanding **economic opportunities for underserved communities**.
- Maintained **strong working relationships** with business leaders, advocacy organizations, and government agencies.

Community & Advocacy Engagement

- Active member of **Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated, the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association, and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity**.
- Recognized for leadership and service with honors including:
 - **Barbara Buckley Leadership and Community Service Award**
 - **Kappa Alpha Psi Leadership League and Jason Frierson Day**
 - **Best Freshman Legislator (2011)**
 - **Nevada Justice Association’s Consumer Advocate of the Year (2018)**
 - **Nevada Press Association’s First Amendment Champion (2019)**

Education & Personal Background

- Graduated from **University of Nevada, Reno (B.S., 1996)** – former leading rusher in NCAA football before a career-ending knee injury.
- Served as **ASUN President** at UNR and later became **Recruitment/Retention Coordinator** for the university.
- Earned **Juris Doctor from the William S. Boyd School of Law at UNLV (2001)**, serving as **SBA President**.
- Committed husband and father, raising two children with his wife, **Abbie Frierson**.

7. POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None

8. ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

None

9. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE:

The Chancellor's Office recommends approval.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Amends Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No _____ Explain: _____



Honorary Degree Nomination Form

1. Degree to be Awarded:

Honorary Masters Honorary Baccalaureate Honorary Associate

2. Please state the name and address of your nominee for an Honorary Degree.

Jason Frierson

[REDACTED ADDRESS]

3. Honorary degrees shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at one of the NSHE's institutions. Persons currently holding public elected office are not eligible for the degree except in extraordinary circumstances.

What are your reasons for nominating this person?

Jason Frierson is a distinguished public servant, legal expert, and community leader whose career has been defined by a commitment to justice, education, and public policy. As the first African American U.S. Attorney for the District of Nevada and a former Speaker of the Nevada State Assembly, Frierson has played a pivotal role in shaping legislation that has directly impacted higher education, equity in public policy, and access to justice. His leadership in advancing policies that support public education funding, student access to resources, and workforce development has contributed to the overall improvement of academic life across Nevada's higher education institutions.

Beyond his legislative and legal work, Frierson has been an unwavering advocate for community engagement and mentorship, particularly for students and young professionals pursuing careers in law, public service, and advocacy. His efforts to strengthen pathways for underrepresented students in higher education, his dedication to public service, and his advocacy for justice reform make him an exemplary candidate for this honorary degree. Recognizing Frierson with this distinction not only honors his exceptional contributions but also reinforces Nevada State University's commitment to service, leadership, and academic excellence.

2.03.2025

President

Date

Nevada State University

Institution

Jason Frierson Bio



For the past 2 ½ years, I served as the US Attorney for the District of Nevada after being nominated by President Biden and confirmed by the Senate as the first African American in Nevada history. In this role, I oversaw the Criminal, Civil and Appellate Divisions, as well as administrative staff in an office of 115 attorneys and staff. I made it a priority to have greater community engagement, improve partnerships with federal and local law enforcement agencies, rebrand the office in the eyes of the judiciary after years of declining perception from the bench, and worked hard to make sure, that the office better reflects the community it serves.

Prior to being confirmed as US Attorney, I practiced in civil litigation and family law, primarily negotiating domestic and international surrogacy contracts. For 15 years, I also worked on both sides of the criminal justice system, as a public defender and as a prosecutor. Through the 2007 and 2009 state legislative sessions, I lobbied on behalf of Clark County on issues related to criminal justice policy, social services and utility provider matters. After lobbying, I was elected to serve in the Nevada State Assembly for 10 years, including 6 years as the Speaker of the State Assembly, the first African American in Nevada to do so.

In the Assembly, I wrote and passed several pieces of legislation, including policies related to elections, foster care, healthcare billing practices, housing foreclosures, workplace discrimination and harassment, public education funding, and policies expanding clean and renewable energy.

As Speaker, I developed a reputation for maintaining productive, collaborative working relationships across party lines both in the legislature and with the Governor. I also established a practice of meeting weekly with nearly every advocacy sector, including chambers of commerce, unions, progressives, law enforcement, insurance, healthcare, and local government.

I continue to actively engage in community service and am a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated, the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Bar Association, and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. Some of my awards and honors include receiving the Barbara Buckley Leadership and Community Service Award, "Kappa Alpha Psi Leadership League and Jason Frierson Day," voted Best Freshman Legislator 2011, Nevada Justice Association 2018 Consumer Advocate of the Year and 2019 Nevada Press Association First Amendment Champion.

I grew up in Compton, CA, attended the University of Nevada, Reno (B.S., 1996) where I was leading the nation in rushing yards until I suffered a career ending knee injury. I served as ASUN President there before becoming a faculty member at the University of Nevada, Reno as Recruitment/Retention Coordinator. I then attended the William S. Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (J.D., 2001), where I also served as SBA President. My wife Abbie and I are the proud parents of our two children