

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER

Agenda Item Title: Honorary Doctorate Exemption for a Public Official and subsequent approval to award an Honorary Doctorate to Regent Thalia Dondero

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Thalia Dondero is a true advocate of higher education in the State of Nevada, and has served since 1996 as a Regent for the Nevada System of Higher Education. (NSHE). A better part of Regent Dondero's life has been profoundly immersed in serving her community and making Las Vegas a fine place to live, work and raise a family. Her civic and professional affiliations include the areas of education, law enforcement, health care, civic engagement, and environmental protection. The voluminous number of awards and commendations she has received are too numerous to mention. These honors deserve to be recognized in as many ways as possible. Under current guidelines (Procedures & Guidelines Manual, Chapter 8, Section 1), a public elected official is not eligible to receive an Honorary Degree while holding office. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) is asking the NSHE Board of Regents to waive that limitation clause to allow UNLV to award Regent Dondero with its highest honor, an Honorary Doctorate.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

The requested action is for the NSHE Board of Regents to waive the limitation that a person who holds public elective office is not eligible for nomination of an Honorary Doctorate; and, further, to approve the nomination of Regent Thalia Dondero for an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

Regent Thalia Dondero's commitment and dedication to the causes of education and civic duty are exemplary and should be recognized as often, and as publicly, as possible. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas is long overdue in requesting approval to grant an Honorary Degree to Regent Dondero.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Has demonstrated through actions and deeds concern for and commitment to the community's welfare and improvement.
- Dedicated to the advancement of improved educational opportunities for all.
- A trailblazer who has helped shape Nevada with an unwavering commitment to public education.
- Committed herself to the noble struggle for human rights.
- Has made a career of humanity.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- Other NSHE Regents are also deserving of an Honorary Doctorate

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

- There is no alternative other than to not receive the waiver of the limitation of a public elective official and subsequently to not grant the Honorary Doctorate.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title #_____ Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #_____ Section #_____
- X Other: Request exemption to award a public official an Honorary Doctorate (see Procedures and Guidelines Manual, Chapter 8, Section 1)
- Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No X
Explain: _____



Honorary Degree

Nomination Form

1. Degree to be Awarded:

Honorary Doctorate Honorary Baccalaureate Honorary Associate

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

Regent Thalia Dondero

2931 Pinehurst

Las Vegas, NV 89109

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? (Attach additional pages, if necessary.)

Regent Thalia Dondero is a true trailblazer with a steadfast determination to do whatever is necessary to develop and improve the community, in its broadest sense of the word. Not only is she an exemplary advocate for civic responsibility, she is a proactive champion for accessibility of higher education to every person who desires to achieve that goal.

Most recently, Thalia Dondero was a recipient of the prestigious 2006 Education Hero Award given by The Public Education Foundation, dedicated to improving public education in Southern Nevada. This award recognizes and honors individuals throughout the State of Nevada who have made significant civic and charitable contributions impacting public education. She has been selected as an "Education

**NEVADA SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION
PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES MANUAL**

CHAPTER 8

DEGREES AND AWARDS

Section 1. Distinguished Nevadan and Honorary Degree Nominations

1. Distinguished Nevadans

- a. Nominations for the award of Distinguished Nevadan will be made by the Board of Regents. Nominations must be received by the Chief Administrative Officer of the Board no later than December 31 of each academic year. The Board of Regents shall make the award on or before March 31 of each academic year.
- b. The purpose of the awards is to recognize prominent individuals who are present or former residents of the state for their significant achievements contributing to the cultural, economic, scientific, or social advancement of Nevada and its people; or for exceptional service to the state or nation that has influenced constructively the well-being of humankind. Persons currently holding public elective office shall not be eligible to be nominated for Distinguished Nevadan, except that the Board of Regents reserves the right to waive this limitation at its own discretion in extraordinary circumstances.
- c. No more than five persons per year shall be given the award of Distinguished Nevadan by the Board of Regents (*one north, one south, one rural, two at large*). These awards shall normally be given at spring commencement exercises.

2. Honorary Doctorates

- a. Nominations for Honorary Doctorates shall be made to the Board of Regents by the Presidents of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the University of Nevada, Reno.
- b. Honorary Doctorates may, at the discretion of the university Presidents and with the approval of the Board of Regents, be conferred at any time during the year at an appropriate ceremony. Normally, no more than two honorary doctorates will be conferred at each university's commencement ceremony.
- c. Honorary Doctorates shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at each university, or to distinguished visitors. Persons currently holding public elective office shall not be eligible to be nominated for an Honorary Doctorate, except that the Board of Regents reserves the right to waive this limitation at its own discretion in extraordinary circumstances. (B/R 10/98)

3. Honorary Baccalaureate Degrees

- a. Nominations for Honorary Baccalaureate Degrees shall be made to the Board of Regents by the Presidents of Nevada State College and Great Basin College.
- b. Exclusive of a yearly commencement speaker for each college, normally no more than two persons per year for each college shall be awarded Honorary Baccalaureate Degrees by the Board of Regents.
- c. Honorary Baccalaureate Degrees shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at each college, or to distinguished visitors. Persons currently holding public elective office shall not be eligible to be nominated for an Honorary Baccalaureate Degree, except that the Board of Regents reserves the right to waive this limitation at its own discretion in extraordinary circumstances.

4. Honorary Associate Degrees

- a. Nominations for Honorary Associate Degrees shall be made to the Board of Regents by the Presidents of Community College of Southern Nevada, Truckee Meadows Community College and Western Nevada Community College.
- b. Exclusive of a yearly commencement speaker for each community college, normally no more than two persons per year for each community college shall be awarded Honorary Associate Degrees by the Board of Regents.
- c. Honorary Associate Degrees shall be awarded to persons who have made significant contributions to the improvement of the quality of academic programs and academic life at each community college, or to distinguished visitors. Persons currently holding public elective office shall not be eligible to be nominated for an Honorary Associate Degree, except that the Board of Regents reserves the right to waive this limitation at its own discretion in extraordinary circumstances.

(B/R 1/87, 10/98, 3/03; Added 6/05)