

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS DEGREE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa to award an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to James Albert Leach at Fall 2016 or Spring 2017 Commencement.

**Executive Summary:** The University of Northern Iowa wishes to recognize Mr. Leach for his distinguished career in public service, including the Foreign Service, the U.S. Congress, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Details on Mr. Leach's Accomplishments:**

- ◇ Mr. Leach, a native of Davenport, Iowa, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics from Princeton University and a Master of Arts degree in Soviet Studies from Johns Hopkins University. He continued his studies in this area at the London School of Economics.
- ◇ As a Foreign Service officer, Mr. Leach was a delegate to the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the U.N. General Assembly. In 1973, he resigned his commission in protest of the Saturday Night Massacre when Richard Nixon fired his Attorney General, Elliot Richardson, and the independent counsel investigating the Watergate break-in, Archibald Cox.
- ◇ Mr. Leach is best known for his 30 years of service as a representative in Congress. Elected in 1976, he chaired the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services from 1995 to 2001 and was a senior member of the House Committee on International Relations from 2001 to 2006, serving as the chair of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. He also served on the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. As chair of the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, he pressed for a Comprehensive Test Ban and led the first House debate on nuclear freeze. He also founded and served as co-chair of the Congressional Humanities Council.
- ◇ Mr. Leach supported campaign reform and pressed unsuccessfully for a system of partial public financing of elections whereby small contributions could be matched by federal funds with accompanying limits on the amounts that could be spent in campaigns including the personal resources candidates could put in their own races. In his own campaigns, he did not accept donations from outside of Iowa.
- ◇ After his defeat for reelection in 2006, Mr. Leach served as Professor at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and Interim Director of the Institute of Politics and Lecturer at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.
- ◇ In 2009, President Barack Obama appointed Mr. Leach to serve as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a position he held until 2013. Under his leadership at the NEH, a Bridging Cultures program was instituted to promote understanding and mutual respect for diverse groups within the United States and abroad. As part of this effort, he conducted "Civility Tours" across the country to expand citizen understanding of American history and values, the Civil Rights movement, and foreign cultures.

- ◇ Under his leadership at NEH, the agency helped launch a National Digital Public Library to establish a unified gateway to digital collections of books, artworks, and artifacts from libraries, museums, and other cultural sites across the country.
- ◇ Mr. Leach presently holds the position of Chair in Public Affairs, Visiting Professor of Law and Senior Scholar in the College of Law at the University of Iowa. He holds 13 honorary degrees, has received decorations from two foreign governments, and is the recipient of the Wayne Morse Integrity in Politics Award, the Adlai Stevenson Award from the United Nations Association, the Edgar Wayburn Award from the Sierra Club, the Norman Borlaug Public Service Award, and the Woodrow Wilson Medal from Princeton University.
- ◇ Mr. Leach has served on the board of several public companies and non-profit organizations, including the Century Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Kettering Foundation, Pro Publica and Common Cause, which he chaired.
- ◇ In 1960, he won the Iowa State high school Wrestling Championship at the 138-pound weight class. A three-sport athlete in college, Mr. Leach was elected to the Wrestling Hall of Fame in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in Waterloo, Iowa.
- ◇ The University of Northern Iowa wishes to recognize Mr. Leach for his extraordinary accomplishments with an honorary degree.