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The Science Coalition Honors Congressman Brian Bilbray (R-CA) for Commitment to Maintaining America's Leadership in Basic Research

Washington, D.C., Oct. 10, 2012 – The Science Coalition today honored Congressman Brian Bilbray with its Champion of Science award in recognition of his strong and enduring commitment to funding the basic research that keeps the United States and the state of California at the forefront of scientific discovery and technological innovation.

“Congressman Bilbray has been a passionate advocate for biomedical and alternative energy research and has been especially influential in efforts to increase funding for research at the National Institutes of Health. He exemplifies a true Champion of Science and we are honored to present him with this award,” said Science Coalition President Abby Benson of the University of Colorado.

Congressman Bilbray serves on the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee, and is co-chair of the Biomedical Research Caucus and the Algae Energy Caucus. Throughout his career, he has been an ardent supporter of federal funding for scientific research. During his first term, Bilbray was one of the first Republicans to sign onto a resolution urging the doubling of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget. This year, Bilbray co-authored a Dear Colleague letter with fellow 2012 Champion of Science awardee Congressman Ed Markey (D-MA) urging the House Appropriations Committee to provide at least \$1.3 billion in increased NIH funding. More than 150 other members of Congress ultimately joined their effort.

“Scientific research is a truly American issue and one that has a dramatic and tangible impact on our health, education, environment, economic development and global competitiveness,” said Dr. Sandra Brown, vice chancellor for research at University of California San Diego. “Congressman Bilbray understands the importance of this in a very fundamental way, as is reflected by his sustained and bipartisan leadership in support of these critical issues before Congress. His continued work across party lines in support of research and innovation has been a tremendous benefit, not just to UCSD and the San Diego region but for the nation as a whole.”

Dr. Brown and Duane Roth, CEO of CONNECT, presented the award to Congressman Bilbray on behalf of The Science Coalition at an event in San Diego this morning. They were joined by representatives from the higher education, research and life sciences communities. The University of California is a member of The Science Coalition. CONNECT, started at UCSD, is a regional program devoted to catalyzing the creation of innovative technology and life sciences products in San Diego County.

“San Diego is fortunate that we have a life science champion like Congressman Bilbray on a critical House Committee where he can advance the interests of innovation and patient care. Congressman Bilbray personally understands and appreciates the inherent challenges in the innovation ecosystem and works in a bipartisan way to find solutions to spur innovation, not hinder it. The Science Coalition should be commended for recognizing Congressman Bilbray’s work as a bipartisan Champion of Science,” Roth stated.

“Mr. Bilbray has a long history of working in a bipartisan manner to insure appropriate funding of the NIH and the sciences in general,” said Joe Panetta, President and CEO of BIOCOM, the Southern California life sciences trade association. “In 2009, he was the only California Republican and one of only 20 Republicans nationwide to join Democrats in passing an appropriations bill (HR 3293) significantly increasing NIH funding, and has since continued that advocacy for the NIH. He is one of a precious few in Congress who understands medical innovation and its importance both to our economy and to public health.”

The Science Coalition’s Champion of Science Award recognizes members of Congress whose actions and votes consistently reflect their belief that basic scientific research, conducted at universities and national labs across the country, is essential to the nation’s ability to address pressing issues in health, security, energy and the environment, and additionally, that a strong federally supported basic research enterprise drives innovation that fuels the U.S. economy. Congressman Bilbray joins a distinguished group of 60 current and former Members of Congress who have received this award since 1999.

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The Science Coalition, a non-profit, nonpartisan organization of the nation’s leading public and private research universities, is dedicated to sustaining strong federal funding of basic scientific research as a means to stimulate the economy, spur innovation and drive America’s global competitiveness. Learn more at www.sciencecoalition.org.