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**The Science Coalition Honors U.S. Senator Dick Durbin
for Commitment to Maintaining America's Leadership in Basic Scientific Research**

Washington, DC, March 16, 2015 –The Science Coalition today presented U.S. Senator Dick Durbin with its Champion of Science Award in recognition of his commitment to funding the basic research that keeps the United States and the state of Illinois at the forefront of scientific and medical discovery and technological innovation.

The award was presented to Senator Durbin at an event at 1871, a co-working center for digital startups in Chicago. Leaders from the five Science Coalition member universities in Illinois joined together to present the award. They were: Morton Schapiro, President, Northwestern University; Randy J. Dunn, System President, Southern Illinois University; Robert A. Easter, President, University of Illinois; Timothy Killeen, President-elect, University of Illinois; Eric Isaacs, Provost, University of Chicago; and Lesley Rigg, Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships, Northern Illinois University.

Entrepreneurs, researchers, students and university representatives attended the event to thank Senator Durbin for his leadership on issues important to science and technology and to hear about new legislation he is introducing, the American Innovation Act, to fund basic scientific research. The goal of the American Innovation Act is to put funding for basic research at five agencies – the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science, Department of Defense Science and Technology Programs, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Science Directorate, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology – on a consistent, steady growth path over the next decade. It complements legislation introduced by Senator Durbin in 2014 that would similarly provide funding growth and certainty for the National Institutes of Health and certain other agencies focused on biomedical research.

“The Science Coalition is pleased to recognize Senator Durbin as a Champion of Science. Not only does he have a long track-record of support for the important scientific and medical research being conducted at the universities and national laboratories in his state, but he has, time and again, stepped forward as a national leader in the effort to ensure strong funding of basic scientific research across America,” said Science Coalition President Amanda Arnold.

“The American Innovation Act announced today illustrates Senator Durbin’s leadership on behalf of America’s science enterprise. In the absence of a broad solution to the budget caps and sequestration that are stifling research and discovery, he has proposed a way to provide increased funding for basic scientific research and ensure that America maintains its scientific and technological leadership. The Science Coalition applauds this effort.”

"I've long advocated for a strong federal investment in scientific research and development that is vital to our national security, economic growth, and public health. Illinois is fortunate to have some of the world's greatest research universities in the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University, and Northern Illinois University. I am honored to receive the Champion of Science Award and I look forward to continuing to work with The Science Coalition to find ways to close the innovation deficit and drive America's global competitiveness," Durbin said. "Failing to adequately invest in basic science research puts America's place as the world's innovation leader at risk, especially at a time when other nations are pouring resources into those areas. That's why I'm introducing the American Innovation Act, which will give a sustained economic boost to research that leads to scientific discovery and technological innovation."

"Senator Dick Durbin has long been a leading Congressional advocate for federal research funding. He recognizes the importance of research to national security, economic growth, and public health," said Northwestern University President Morton Schapiro. "Higher education and healthcare institutions in Illinois, and nationwide, count heavily on his tireless work to sustain federal support for researchers, students and patients in an increasingly strained budgetary environment."

"As Illinois' senior Senator and then-Chairman of the Defense Appropriations subcommittee, Senator Durbin helped bring the \$320 million Digital Manufacturing and Design Innovation Institute (DMDII) to UI LABS in Chicago, an accomplishment that promises to spark economic growth in Illinois, revolutionize American manufacturing, and drive down military costs in tight budgetary times," said Robert A. Easter, President of the University of Illinois. "Senator Durbin also helped boost defense basic research significantly last year. The legislation he announces today promises to advance a more agile military and strengthen discovery science at the National Science Foundation. The University of Illinois is grateful for Sen. Durbin's commitment to ensure the United States remains the world leader in innovation."

"Senator Dick Durbin has built a legacy that encompasses so many issues and his unwavering support of scientific study and funding federal research is an important component of his record of service," said Southern Illinois University System President Randy J. Dunn. "And just as those of us in higher education work constantly to find new methods, processes or cures, Senator Durbin has never rested on his previous accomplishments, but continually looks for new opportunities to improve the lives of those he represents."

"Throughout his prominent career, Senator Durbin has distinguished himself as a tireless advocate for advancing the science agenda of Argonne and Fermi national laboratories, and the research universities of Illinois, including the University of Chicago," said University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer. "His leadership has always been and remains an invaluable asset to the state of Illinois and the nation."

"Senator Durbin has, throughout his distinguished career, been a leader in advocating for higher education and research entities in the state of Illinois and across the country. As a public research university on the edge of Chicagoland, NIU recognizes his important work to advance research and innovation in our region and nation as critical to our future success in a highly-competitive global marketplace," said Northern Illinois University President Doug Baker.

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. Senator Durbin joins a distinguished group of more than 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.