

*******EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, MARCH 12th, 12:01 a.m.*******



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National PTA to Honor Members of Congress
Award recipients are Sens. Kennedy, Cardin and Rep. Biggert
Advocacy awards will go to state and local PTAs

CHICAGO (March 4, 2009) –National PTA will honor three of our country's champions of education on March 12 during the organization's National Legislative Conference (March 10-13). U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) will receive the PTA Founder Award and PTA will present the Congressional Voice for Children Award to U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) and U.S. Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-IL).

The presentations will take place on Capitol Hill at a special awards luncheon in the Russell Building. Hundreds of child advocates and legislative leaders will be at the ceremony which occurs between 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Senator Kennedy will be honored for his decades of championing many of the same issues that PTA has worked on since its founding, most notably in the areas of supporting at-risk youth and children with disabilities. He has sponsored the Keeping Parents Engaged (PACE) Act which encourages parent, family, and community involvement in schools and provides integrated services and comprehensive supports to ensure that schools are centers of communities. As lead sponsor of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, he worked to end insurance discrimination in mental health coverage for all children. Senator Kennedy is the author of the 1994 Family and Medical Leave Act and he co-authored legislation that created the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which today provides critically needed coverage to uninsured children.

"The PTA has been improving the lives of children in school and at home since its founding over a century ago. By encouraging family members to become actively involved in their children's education, supporting efforts such as the Fatherhood Initiative and through many other initiatives, the PTA has been a true pioneer in education. We now have an historic opportunity to make new progress in achieving this indispensable mission. I'm honored to receive this award, and I look forward to working with the PTA and President Obama to strengthen this vital aspect of American education," said Sen. Kennedy.

Senator Cardin will be honored for his long history of giving a voice to voiceless children. Most recently, he offered an amendment that was eventually included in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The amendment prohibits states from incarcerating children with status offenses such as truancy or running away from home. Studies have shown there are better alternatives than confinement in these cases, and advocates across the country had been trying to phase out this practice in favor of family-focused, strength-based options.

"I am honored to receive the National PTA's Congressional Voice for Children Award. We share a commitment to creating a better environment where all children can learn," said Senator Cardin. "Through effective federal, state and local partnerships, we will ensure communities have the infrastructure in place to provide children in need adequate support services rather than face incarceration or other severe penalties."

Representative Biggert is a long-time champion for education and for highly vulnerable populations of students, including homeless children and youth. Her commitment to uniting families, schools, and communities is most evident by her office's continual work in gathering input from parents, teachers, and practitioners; just recently, her staff worked with local PTA units and high school student leaders in Chicago to deliver Internet safety trainings to middle school students. Last year, she co-sponsored the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which renewed support for street outreach and transitional living programs across the country. She also helped pass the "FAFSA Fix" bill, which helped simplify the process for students seeking financial aid to go to college.

NOTE: The information below is not embargoed. Details to come in separate news release. During the ceremony, PTA will also recognize state and local PTAs who have done exemplary work in taking action for children. California PTA and the Capistrano Unified Council of PTSAs will receive PTA's Outstanding Advocacy Awards. National PTA will also launch a new award in memory of a past National PTA president who was a model of public service and volunteerism throughout her life. The PTA Shirley Igo Advocate of the Year Award will be presented to Kim Anderson of Laguna Niguel, California for her amazing leadership at the local level and her years of organizing a community of child advocates.

About National PTA

PTA comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parent involvement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education health, and welfare of children and youth.