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The Learning First Alliance Names Richard W. Riley as its First Education Visionary Award Winner

*Former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley heralded as a leader in education reform*

Washington, D.C. – May 12, 2011 – The Learning First Alliance (LFA), a partnership of 17 national education associations representing more than ten million parents, educators and policymakers, has bestowed its first Education Visionary Award on Secretary Richard W. Riley. Secretary Riley served as the U.S. Secretary of Education under President Bill Clinton and is a long-time champion of public education reform.

The Learning First Alliance is honoring Secretary Riley for his work in public service and for his leadership which has benefited all the constituencies LFA organizations serve. While serving as governor of South Carolina he raised important funding and support for education through the Education Improvement Act, which has been called the “most comprehensive educational reform measure in the United States” by the RAND Corporation. He also served two terms as the U.S. Secretary of Education and made it a priority to raise academic standards, improve teaching and increase education grants to help disadvantaged children attend college and reach success beyond the classroom. In 2008, Time Magazine named Riley as one of the “Top 10 Best Cabinet Members” of the 20th century.

Today, he has three colleges named after him, the Richard W. Riley College of Education at Winthrop University, the Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership at Walden University and the Richard W. Riley Institute at Furman University, where he serves as a Distinguished Professor of Government, Politics, and Public Leadership. He is also a Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of South Carolina.
Honorees of the Education Visionary Award are individuals who exhibit:

- Exceptional leadership in bringing groups who have a variety of points of view together to work collaboratively
- Tenacity in focusing on the needs of children from all environmental and economic backgrounds
- Respect for professional educators and a belief that they too have the best interests of children as the focus of their work
- Flexibility in engaging the corporate community as partners in public education improvement
- A demonstrated belief that public education is the cornerstone of our democratic way of life and should be nurtured for the benefit of every American

“Secretary Riley embodies so many of the principles that the Learning First Alliance stands for,” said Cheryl Williams, executive director of the Learning First Alliance. “It is our hope that the Education Visionary Award will identify our nation’s most influential educational leaders, help to promote effective models of leadership in support of public schools and pave the way for the future leaders to come.”

About the Learning First Alliance: