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ECS to Honor Gene Wilhoit with 2013 James Bryant Conant Award

Denver – This year’s recipient of Education Commission of the States’ (ECS) James Bryant Conant Award is Gene Wilhoit. ECS Chair-elect and Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval will present the award on June 26 at the 2013 ECS National Forum on Education Policy in St. Louis, Missouri.

This award, named for the former Harvard University president and co-founder of ECS, recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to American education. Wilhoit joins an esteemed list of past recipients, including E.D. Hirsch, Thurgood Marshall, Fred Rogers, John Goodlad, and Claiborne Pell.

Recently retired as executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Wilhoit successfully brought together states to find common ground on critical education issues such as college- and career-ready assessments. An exemplary facilitator and collaborator, he worked with the National Governors Association to build consensus on the Common Core State Standards. The standards have been adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

As Kentucky’s commissioner of education from 2000-06, Wilhoit focused on key factors that could impact education for every child. He oversaw finance reform, raised public awareness and support of high expectations for all children, and improved assessment and accountability systems. His previous leadership positions include service as a special assistant in the U.S. Department of Education, executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education, and chief of the Arkansas Department of Education.

“Mr. Wilhoit is a dedicated public servant who has improved education at the local, state, and national levels. From his beginnings as a social studies teacher to his transition as the executive director of the new National Center for Innovation in Education, he has shown a tremendous dedication to public education and is truly deserving of the James Bryant Conant award,” said ECS President Jeremy Anderson.

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ECS is the only nationwide, nonpartisan organization that works directly with governors, legislators, chief state school officers, higher education officials and other leaders across all areas of education, from pre-K to college and the workforce. Since 1965, we have tracked policy, translated research, provided unbiased advice and created opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another. ECS is located in Denver and maintains the nation's most extensive clearinghouse on education policy.