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Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh Named One of Nation's Most Innovative Education Leaders

Receives 2005 Cable's Leaders in Learning Award

**Media Note: Awardees are in Washington, DC through May 18
To arrange interviews or receive digital photographs, call contact**

Washington, DC – For raising voter turnout, especially among 18- to 24-year-olds, by educating Kansas youth about the rights, responsibilities, and mechanics of participating in American democracy, Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh is being honored nationally for his substantial contributions to learning in Kansas.

Cox Communications Kansas and Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry's education foundation, announced today that Thornburgh is a winner of the new *Cable's Leaders in Learning Award*, which recognizes the most inventive classroom educators, administrators, community leaders, and policymakers who are transforming education from Kindergarten through high school (K-12).

"To be selected as *Cable's Leaders in Learning Award* winners, these awardees demonstrated dedication to improving learning for all children," said Helen Soulé, Ph.D., executive director of Cable in the Classroom. "They did this by reaching beyond the familiar to support and encourage young people to achieve their best. Armed with a high quality education, young people will be prepared to meet the world that awaits them – and to improve and transform it for their own children."

Thornburgh is being recognized in the Policymaker award category for creating Kids Voting Kansas, a grassroots, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to educating Kansas youth about democracy and voting. Thanks to Thornburgh's tireless efforts, Kids Voting Kansas has been embraced by schools and communities, with 55 communities now participating state-wide. Average voter turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds nationwide is only 15 percent; in areas of Kansas where Kids Voting has been implemented for 10 years or more, an average 65 percent of that age group turn out to vote. Beginning in kindergarten, students learn how to research the candidates, listen to debates, and become responsible citizens through Kids Voting. Under Thornburgh's direction, the program has become the largest of its kind in the nation.

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Thornburgh and the other *Leaders in Learning Award* winners are in Washington, D.C. this week to attend a gala awards ceremony, to meet with Members of Congress and education leaders, and to participate in a series of professional development events. Awardees receive a cash prize from Cable in the Classroom, which Thornburgh will donate to Kids Voting Kansas.

“Abraham Lincoln said, ‘The philosophy of the school room in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next,’” said Thornburgh. “That’s why we must instill in our youth the importance of participating in democracy, and Kids Voting is the program that will get it done.”

The awards ceremony, hosted by Bill Kurtis, host of A&E’s *American Justice* and producer of *Investigative Reports* and *Cold Case Files*, will take place on May 17 at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer will interview award-winners during the awards presentations. Marc Summers, host of *Unwrapped* on the Food Network, John Anderson, an ESPN *Sportscenter* anchor, and Jeff Johnson, host of the BET documentary series *The Cousin Jeff Chronicles*, will present the awards. Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives J. Dennis Hastert will receive a tribute from the cable industry. Rising comedian Ted Alexandro will be performing a ten-minute routine.

“We hope that these awards, and the exceptional work on behalf of learning they honor, will move others to strive for similar excellence and stretch the boundaries of the kind of excellence that is possible in education,” said Soulé. “We at Cable in the Classroom will always have that – and these awardees – close to the heart of our mission.”

The awards fall into four categories:

- **General Excellence** – Awards given for general excellence in education.
- **Pushing the Envelope** – Awards given to those redefining the education frontier by using cable content or cable technology.
- **Policymaker** – Awards given to federal, state, or local policymakers who have contributed to the improvement of K-12 education in the broadest sense;
- **Media literacy** – An award given in partnership with the National PTA to recognize excellence in advancing media literacy skills.

For more information about *Cable’s Leaders in Learning Awards*, please visit www.ciconline.org or www.leadersinlearningawards.org.