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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sen. Lamar Alexander receives Scenic America's Stafford Award

WASHINGTON -- Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee received Scenic America's highest honor, the Stafford Award, during its recent meeting of affiliates and Board of Directors in Washington, D.C.

Senator Alexander's selection recognizes his longtime, outspoken support for America's scenic and natural landscapes. An early advocate of sustainable tourism, Senator Alexander has sponsored legislation to protect scenic wilderness, spearheaded efforts to improve air quality in national parks (especially his beloved Smoky Mountains) and, as chairman of President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors in the late 1980s, recommended a national network of greenways and designated scenic byways.

During his two terms as chief executive of Tennessee (1979-1987), then-Governor Alexander introduced initiatives to limit tree-cutting and visual clutter along the state's highways, declaring that "tourists come to Tennessee to see the scenery, not the billboards." (Subsequent studies confirm that he was right: Beauty sells!)

More recently, Senator Alexander led the successful effort to block an amendment, tacked onto a defense appropriations bill, which would have allowed the rebuilding of nonconforming billboards destroyed by hurricanes. Invoking Lady Bird Johnson's landmark 1965 Highway Beautification Act, Senator Alexander called the amendment "a big wet kiss to the outdoor advertising industry" and "a full-scale assault on one of the most important pieces of legislation that helps keep our country beautiful." *USA Today* said his efforts resulted in "a rare setback for power and money in the Senate."

The Stafford Award is named for former U.S. Senator Robert Stafford of Vermont, for his concern for the environment and efforts to strengthen federal highway beautification laws. Previous recipients include Scenic America founder Marion Fuller Brown of Maine, Governor Pete Wilson of California, Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island and U.S. Transportation Secretary Federico Pena.

"Senator Alexander has been the greatest advocate for 'America the Beautiful' in Congress since Mr. Stafford himself," said Mary Tracy, Scenic America president. "We can think of no one more deserving of this award."

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Scenic America is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America's roadways, countryside and communities. We have accomplished this mission for over 30 years with the help of state and local affiliates all around the country, including Scenic Tennessee and Scenic Knoxville.