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SECRETARY THOMPSON TO BE HONORED AS HEALTH LEADER OF THE YEAR

Atlanta, GA—The Commissioned Officers Association (COA) of the U.S. Public Health Service has announced that HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson will receive the organization's prestigious Health Leader of the Year award for 2002.

The award, which was established in 1987, recognizes individuals who have made notable contributions to the health of the nation through research, administration, or service delivery. Past recipients have included former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop, Dr. Samuel Broder and Senator Bill Frist.

"Secretary Thompson is being recognized for his long-standing support of important public health issues. In particular, the association is honoring the Secretary for his leadership and his very recent visible, proactive support of sound public health principles as America faces unprecedented challenges from domestic terrorist activities," said Jerry Farrell, executive director of COA.

Secretary Thompson will receive the award Sunday evening, April 21 at the opening of the annual U.S. Public Health Service Professionals Conference, "Leading the Public Health Response to Disease and Disaster: Global Vision, National Action," sponsored by COA at the Atlanta Sheraton Hotel. He also will address the group regarding some of the key challenges facing the public health care system.

The Commissioned Officers Association is the primary professional organization for active, reserve, former and retired officers of the U.S. Public Health Service. Its members serve in key leadership roles in the U.S. Surgeon General's Office, the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Indian Health Service and other major public health agencies.