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Contact: Emily Marthaler

202-367-1112

**‘America’s Smartland: Let the Midwest Surprise You’  
Video Contest Showcases Region’s Unique Strengths**

**CHICAGO** – Recognizing the collective strength of the Midwest as an ideal place to live, work, explore and get a quality education, the Midwestern Governors Association (MGA) launched a video contest today, which will award over \$10,000 in prize money to the winning entries.

The contest is designed to draw attention to the unique qualities of the Midwestern region and all it has to offer – a strong work ethic and climate for business and job growth; high-quality schools and colleges; a stand-out standard of living, including vibrant cities and towns, affordable housing, cultural, recreational and sporting activities; four distinct seasons and breathtaking natural wonders.

“No one can tell the great Midwestern story better than its people,” said Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, Chair of the MGA. “This video contest is a creative way to engage Midwesterners to tell our unique story, share our strengths and promote the region, from the quality of our workforce to our quality of life.”

Jesse Heier, executive director of the MGA, said, “For too long, Midwesterners have let others define what it means to be a Midwesterner. This contest will help tell the region’s positive story. Through this effort we aim to bring renewed attention to the region’s past successes and future opportunities.”

The contest officially launches today and will run through December 2, 2012, with submissions accepted through October 15. In addition to a \$2,500 grand prize winner, one entry from each MGA member state will be identified through a public voting period and recognized through a \$1,000 “people’s choice” award. The winning entry will be promoted by the MGA and featured at upcoming events and other activities designed to highlight the region.

**Entering is Easy**

To enter, develop a brief video (up to three minutes) that features your perspective on what makes the Midwest an ideal place to live, raise a family, get an education, build a career and grow a business. Entrants must be residents of an MGA member state - Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

For more information on the contest, how to enter, voting or video criteria, visit [www.midwesterngovernors.org/americassmartland.htm](http://www.midwesterngovernors.org/americassmartland.htm).

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*The MGA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization that brings together the governors of Midwestern states to work cooperatively on issues of importance to the region. Current members of the MGA are Gov. Pat Quinn (Ill.), Gov. Mitch Daniels (Ind.), Gov. Terry Branstad (Iowa), Gov. Sam Brownback (Kansas), Gov. Rick Snyder (Mich.), Gov. Mark Dayton (Minn.), Gov. Jay Nixon (Mo.), Gov. John Kasich (Ohio) and Gov. Scott Walker (Wis.).*