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**California Science Center *Science Matters* Speakers Program
Presents
“Religion on the Brain”
November 4, 2006**

Los Angeles -- On November 4, 2006, the California Science Center's *Science Matters* speakers program “Religion on the Brain” will feature a neurologist presenting the latest findings in brain research about the neural processing of religious thought and experience. In light of this research, panelists will discuss how humans reconcile these different aspects of their brains in understanding of the world. The panelists will discuss the possibility that humans are genetically hard-wired for critical thinking and religious spirituality. Can we believe in science and still have faith? **Conan Nolan**, *NBC4 reporter* will serve as moderator for the panel discussion, which is free to the public, scheduled to take place from 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. in the Loker Conference room at the California Science Center.

Panelists will include: **Vilayanur Ramachandran, M.D., Ph.D.**, *Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition at UC San Diego*, a pioneer in experimental neurology, who found that patients who suffer seizures from temporal lobe epilepsy display an unusual obsession with religious matters; **Joan Roughgarden, Ph.D.**, *Professor of Biological Sciences, Stanford University* and author of *Evolution and Christian Faith: Reflections of an Evolutionary Biologist*, who believes that evolution should not be portrayed as an enemy of faith; **Warren Brown, Ph.D.**, neuroscientist and *Director, Travis Research Institute and Professor of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary* who writes and lectures on the integration of neuroscience and faith; and **Michael Shermer, Ph.D.**, *director of the Skeptics Society*, author of *How We Believe: Science, Skepticism, and the Search for God* (2000). In Shermer's view, religious belief is biologically based and as science progresses it tends to supplant God.

Program participants will have a chance to hear the debates on this issue and to ask panelists questions at the end of the program. All those interested in attending may RSVP at 213-744-2420.

Neuroscience and Religion Background

As a result of advances in brain imaging technology, researchers are learning more about how different areas of the brain function based on their respective neural activity. In 1997, scientists discovered a particular area of the brain associated with intense religious experience, named by the popular media as the “God Spot.” Neuroscientists claim that this discovery neither reduces religion to a brain function, nor does it prove that our brains are designed to receive the divine.

Science Matters Programs at the California Science Center

Three *Science Matters* programs are held annually (fall, winter, spring) at the Science Center on Saturday afternoons. Next year's two programs will focus on:

Nanotechnology: Small world – Big issues (*January 27, 2007*)

New advances in the field of nanotechnology will create a wide range of products from better diagnostic technologies and disease treatments to stain and wrinkle-free fabrics. While interest is high, there is little public understanding of the science of nanotechnology. And there is growing practical and ethical concern over the possible health and environmental risks from this emerging field. A science presentation explains the current science of nanotechnology and speculates on its future course. In this light, panelists discuss the complex ethical and legal issues that infuse the discussion of nanotechnology.

Global Climate Change and the Human Response (*April 21, 2007*)

There is now little debate within the scientific community that the Earth is warming. While not all scientists agree on how much humans are responsible, according to the National Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the national science academies from all G8 nations, the strong consensus of scientific opinion is that "greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise (National Academy of Sciences 2005)." Panelists will discuss the range of human responses to global warming and the potential roles played by government, business and private citizens.

The **California Science Center** and **IMAX Theater** are located in historic Exposition Park just west of the Harbor 110 Freeway at 700 State Drive, Los Angeles. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., except on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission to the exhibits is free. For recorded information, including IMAX show times, phone 323.SCIENCE (323.724-3623). IMAX ticket prices range from \$4.50 to \$7.50. For advance ticket purchases, group rates, or to make free reservations for any visiting group of 15 or more (*required*), call 213.744-2019. Parking is available in the guest lot at Figueroa and 39th Street at \$6 per car, \$10 for buses or oversized vehicles. Both the Science Center and IMAX Theater are wheelchair accessible. For further information, please visit our website at www.californiasciencecenter.org.

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