QUEENS COLLEGE

Naming of the Barry Commoner Center for the Biology of Natural Systems

RESOLVED, That the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York approve the naming of the “Barry Commoner Center for the Biology of Natural Systems” at Queens College.

EXPLANATION: Barry Commoner ran for President of the United States in 1980 on the Citizens Party ticket. In 1981, at the invitation of the president of Queens College, he brought the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems (CBNS) from Washington University in St. Louis, where it was founded in 1966, to New York City. From 1981 until his death in 2012, Barry Commoner made a very significant contribution to New York City and New York State. He spearheaded scientific studies on the hazards of incineration; the feasibility of intensive recycling; the fate of PCBs evaporating from the Hudson River; the deposition of pesticides into the New York City Watershed; and the national and international generation and transport of key air pollutants. During his final years, he worked on a book on the origin of life.

Re-naming CBNS after Barry Commoner will achieve several purposes. It will provide institutional recognition for his decades of service to Queens College, CUNY, New York City and New York State. It will reinforce the mission of the Center as a place to address pressing environmental science issues in a relevant, transparent and highly interactive method. It will provide greater visibility to the work of this singular New Yorker while simultaneously continuing to lend his name and prestige to CBNS, Queens College, and CUNY.

CBNS has continued to thrive since Mr. Commoner’s decline in activity over the past decade. It now employs over 70 people, has been granted close to $10 million in external funds in 2013 (over $50 million in the past 10 years), and remains heavily involved in critical environmental issues. Naming CBNS after its founder, Barry Commoner, would bring great honor to the Center and help to ensure its continued success.