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## **Secretary Gassman Highlights Governor's Budget for Working Families**

**Kenosha** – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said Wednesday that Governor Doyle's opportunity budget will help working families and employers of Kenosha County succeed as their region unites under his leadership to meet the challenges of today's global economy.

"Governor Doyle has presented us with a budget that is fiscally responsible, that invests in our future and creates opportunities for hardworking families in Kenosha County and throughout Wisconsin," Secretary Gassman said in addressing the Kenosha County Economic Summit. "We can build on his first term success in growing the economy and creating jobs, we can help working families squeezed by high costs, and we can continue crucial investments in the education and training of our current and future workforce."

Secretary Gassman cited record exports of \$17.2 billion last year as the latest sign of Wisconsin's growing economy. In the southeast region, Kenosha County's population is growing at more than twice the state rate, its average employment of 80,111 last year was the highest since 1990, and its 2006 average unemployment rate of 5.3 percent was the lowest since 2001, she said.

A year ago, Governor Doyle announced a \$12.5 million state investment in the Kenosha Area Business Alliance to help develop a corporate park and create jobs. His budget includes \$1 million in new funding for the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee commuter rail project. Efforts to increase the area's economic momentum include previously awarded \$260,000 in GROW grants supporting regional workforce development. The U.S. Department of Labor initially supported his GROW strategy with \$100,000 in funding and recently awarded a \$500,000 Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant, pledging an additional \$4.5 million as needed.

Secretary Gassman said the Governor's budget helps working families by providing tax relief on health care insurance, child care and college tuition. She said the typical family would save over \$300 a year when health insurance premiums are fully tax deductible, and \$400 a year from a child care tax credit. Among items to ensure Wisconsin's workforce remains second to none, she cited:

- Funding to maintain the state's two-thirds support of public schools, allow smaller class sizes, and add a third year of math and science as a high school graduation requirement;
- More Youth Apprenticeship opportunities by doubling funding to \$2.2 million in the second year of the biennium;
- Four-fold increase to \$8 million for worker training through the Wisconsin Technical College System;

Secretary Gassman addressed the summit meeting at Carthage College. As a member of Governor Doyle's cabinet, she leads the state labor department and oversees 1,900 employees charged with strengthening Wisconsin's workforce.