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CONTACT: Jessica Erickson, Communications Director, 608-266-6753

Secretary Gassman Highlights Governor's Workforce Agenda

Labor Secretary says 'Jobs for the Future' Will Help Northwest Region Grow

CABLE – Speaking today at a Northwest Wisconsin economic summit, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said Governor Doyle's "Jobs for the Future" initiative will help the region meet the challenge of a changing workforce and prepare the skilled workers of tomorrow.

"Like the rest of Wisconsin, the northwest region faces workforce challenges as our population ages and baby boomers retire," Secretary Gassman said. "Governor Doyle's 'Jobs for the Future' initiative will help boost the skills and productivity of our current workers, while preparing the next generation of skilled workers and ensuring Wisconsin's workforce remains second to none."

Secretary Gassman addressed nearly 150 business and community leaders at the 5th Annual Business Development Conference of the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board. The summit's theme at the Lakewoods Resort in Cable was "The Changing Workforce of Northwest Wisconsin ... Are You Ready?"

Secretary Gassman said the "Jobs for the Future" initiative in the Governor's budget includes a four-fold increase in Workforce Advancement Training grants, providing the Wisconsin Technical College System \$8 million over the next two years to increase the job skills of 36,000 workers. To train the next generation of workers, the Governor's budget doubles funding for Youth Apprenticeship to \$2.2 million, providing 4,000 high school students school-to-work opportunities.

"We can open more career pathways and prepare a new generation of highly skilled workers, while helping the workers of today and their employers increase productivity and keep our economy growing strong," Secretary Gassman said.

Secretary Gassman noted the "Jobs for the Future" initiative also includes:

- \$1.5 million *Get LEAN* manufacturing grant program, encouraging local workforce development boards, the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center, and others to propose ways of improving efficiency, productivity, and quality, then compete for grants to fund the pilot projects;
- \$250,000 for a statewide program to help production workers meet the new national Manufacturing Skills Standard Certification. DWD already has provided the funds supplementing efforts to have at least 40% of the workforce certified by 2016.
- 3rd year of math and science as a high school graduation requirement, proposed as part of the Governor's budget. Greater proficiency in math and science will benefit all high school graduates, whether they are bound for college, technical school, or more demanding jobs in advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, or other emerging sectors of a changing high-tech economy.