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Secretary Gassman Highlights Governor's Workforce Initiatives, Salutes Badger State Inc. of Eau Claire for Apprenticeship Training

State Labor Secretary cites training investments as central to economic recovery, growth

EAU CLAIRE – Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman said today steps Governor Doyle has taken to address the state deficit, develop an economic recovery plan and provide worker training will help Wisconsin overcome its biggest challenge in decades.

"Nearly every state has been hit hard by the national economic crisis," Secretary Gassman said. "Faced with an unprecedented \$5.75 billion state deficit, Governor Doyle has offered a budget that remains true to our priorities. He is determined to protect what is most important to our recovery and well being, good schools for our children, health care for those who need it, police and fire protection for all communities, and the ability to grow our economy and create good jobs. The more we work together, the quicker we will be on the road to recovery."

Secretary Gassman cited Governor Doyle's leading role in recovery efforts, working with President Obama and Congressman Dave Obey, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Wisconsin will receive an estimated \$3.7 billion to help maintain jobs, put people to work and protect investments in education, health care and economic development, she said.

In a visit to Badger State, Inc., Secretary Gassman also cited a workforce training package that Governor Doyle announced recently. Funded with \$5.89 million from existing federal programs over the next two years, the package will help workers improve their skills and position Wisconsin for economic recovery and growth.

"We must invest in training, now more than ever, to ensure a skilled workforce and economic growth in Wisconsin as our nation recovers from an economic crisis unprecedented in decades," she said.

The centerpiece of the package is a new approach to workforce development training. The Governor directed nearly \$3 million to fund the Wisconsin Sector Strategies Initiative. Instead of training driven by programs, partnerships led by industry will determine the training needs and align training resources on a regional basis to meet them. The package also includes:

- \$1.5 million for Opportunity Grants to help low-wage workers with only a high school education get short-term training at technical colleges, opening career pathways to better jobs in high demand occupations, such as advanced manufacturing and health care;
- \$700,000 for Emerging Industries Skills Partnership, continuing an initiative the Governor launched a year ago to meet the workforce needs in advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and renewable energy.

While at Badger State, Secretary Gassman presented Fred Gardner, president of the plumbing business, with a commendation from the Governor for Badger State's partnership in the apprenticeship program. Since it was founded in 1977 by Gardner's father, Fritz Gardner, Badger State has trained nearly 40 apprentices.