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Secretary Gassman: Apprenticeships, Path to Quality Workforce *Remarks on workforce development preview Governor's budget address*

Madison – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today addressed the 23rd biennial Apprenticeship Conference and Expo held in Madison. She highlighted the state's apprenticeship program and reported that adult apprenticeship opportunities are increasing as a result of the economic and workforce development initiatives advanced by Governor Doyle.

"Wisconsin's adult apprenticeship program is a sure pathway to a quality workforce," Secretary Gassman said. "The program is one of the reasons our workforce remains second to none. It has been a model to other states since its inception nearly a century ago, first in the nation. Whether you're a recent high school graduate, a veteran returning from active duty, or someone searching for a more rewarding career, the adult apprenticeship program can put you on the path to jobs with good pay and benefits in the skilled trades."

Secretary Gassman further highlighted initiatives that Governor Doyle will include in his state budget:

- A health care package that would make Wisconsin the national leader in health care reform;
- Further investments in education, such as: \$8 million for job training through the Wisconsin Technical College System; the Wisconsin Covenant for eighth graders; and, \$44 million in financial aid for college or technical school;
- Further economic stimulus to sustain momentum, such as: \$40 million for renewable fuels to achieve energy independence and reduce costs for businesses and working families; a Wisconsin Venture Center to connect innovators and entrepreneurs with investors; a Grow Milwaukee package to build on economic assets of the state's largest metropolitan area.

In addition to such economic and workforce development initiatives in the Governor's budget, Secretary Gassman said a special effort this year to reach out to employers and encourage their participation in the adult apprenticeship should further increase enrollment.

Secretary Gassman said an increase in adult apprenticeship enrollment last year was another sign of Wisconsin's growing economy. Enrollment hit a peak of 13,000 in 2001, but dropped below 10,000 following the recession. Enrollment increased last year and is about to exceed 10,000, due mainly the state's construction boom. Construction apprentices now total 5,928, up 220 from a year ago, including 114 minorities and women. Adult apprentices typically start at \$15 to \$16 an hour, about half of what successful apprentices will later earn as journeypersons.

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During an awards luncheon, several individuals and employers received honors. Three people received the Apprentice Leadership Award:

- Alaina Gomez, a single mother from Milwaukee, who excelled as an apprentice in plumbing and now works for J.M. Brennan installing and maintaining medical gas systems at All Saints Hospital in Racine.
- Ivan Milanovic, a Serbian immigrant who overcame a language barrier to become a top electrician at Town & Country Electric, a division of Faith Technologies, Inc., Appleton;
- Dan Treichel, an electric lineman for River Falls Municipal Utilities. He was the utility's first apprentice, and General Manager Carl Gaulke said they could not be more pleased.

Three employers received the Apprenticeship Program Sponsor Award: H.J. Pertzborn Plumbing & Fire Protection Corporation, Madison; Manitowoc Crane Group, Manitowoc; and Appearances at Alma's, Menomonie.

South Central WI Construction Laborers JAC and Zignego Company, Inc., Daniel A. Zignego, Controller won the Affirmative Action Award.

For more information about the adult apprenticeship program, visit the department's website: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dws/appr/default.htm>.