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## **Secretary Gassman announces funding to help meet demand for welders \$125,000 grant supports Southeast Regional Workforce Alliance project**

**Racine** – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced a \$125,000 grant to fund a special effort by the Regional Workforce Alliance to meet the need for welders and metal fabricators in metropolitan Milwaukee and throughout the seven-county region of southeastern Wisconsin.

“Our economy continues to grow and expand under Governor Doyle’s leadership,” Secretary Gassman said. “Unemployment is down, jobs are up, and so are exports. As Wisconsin companies, especially our manufacturers, accept more job orders, we want to make sure they have the skilled workers to fill those orders. Currently, they need welders and metal fabricators. These are good, family supporting jobs, and this grant will help the Regional Workforce Alliance move swiftly to provide workers the necessary skills to fill these jobs and begin rewarding careers in the trades.”

Wisconsin received nearly \$714,000 in federal Workforce Investment Act incentive funding for exceeding performance standards such as job placement after training, job retention and improvement in literacy. Of 23 states to receive incentive funding awards, only 8 received more than Wisconsin.

The grant awarded to RWA will fund the Southeastern Wisconsin Welding Consortium for Career Pathways in Welding/Metal Fabrications Occupations. RWA will work in partnership with the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County, the Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Board, Southeast Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and four technical colleges: Gateway Technical College, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Moraine Park Technical College, and Waukesha Area Technical College.

The collaborative project also will include employers facing shortages. Working closely with them, the consortium will develop strategies to educate, train, place and retain those who want to become welders or metal fabricators. The project offer Career Pathways for students exploring their options and adults already in the workforce, the unemployed and underemployed. In this way, the alliance, technical colleges and the employers can meet the immediate and future needs in the manufacturing sector. Bucyrus International Inc. and P&H Mining Equipment in Milwaukee have been hiring welders and metal fabricators to fill orders for heavy mining equipment in Canada.

In the decade ending 2014, Wisconsin is projected to need 4,610 new welders, or about 460 a year. With moderate on-the-job training or vocational school instruction, individuals can become welders. The entry level wage for welders is \$12.70 with experienced welders earning nearly \$18 an hour. Metal fabricators also are in demand. With moderate, on-the-job training, individuals can gain the skills necessary to become metal fabricators with entry level and experienced pay comparable to welders.

Secretary Gassman announced the grant during a visit to Bert Jensen & Sons, a metal fabricator located in Racine and partner with Gateway Technical College in a boot camp to train welders. She met two welding boot camp graduates now working for Bruce Jensen, president of the company. The grant will fund similar training throughout the region.

In a brief ceremony, Secretary Gassman presented the grant to Francisco Sanchez, president of the Regional Workforce Alliance, which includes the counties of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, Ozaukee, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha counties.