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Thursday, July 19, 2007

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## Secretary Gassman Urges Appleton Students to Sign Governor Doyle's Wisconsin Covenant

### *Labor Secretary Says Assembly Republican Budget Moves State in Wrong Direction by Cutting Support for UW System and Financial Aid*

APPLETON – Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today urged eighth-grade students in Appleton to sign the Wisconsin Covenant, saying the visionary initiative will help the state avoid shortages of skilled workers and ensure a first-rate workforce vital to Wisconsin's continued economic growth. The Wisconsin Covenant is Governor Doyle's plan to help more youth and their families attain a college or technical school education.

"Governor Doyle wants you to know that a college or technical school education is within your grasp," Secretary Gassman told 8<sup>th</sup> grade members of the Fox Valley Boys & Girls Clubs. "College isn't just for children of wealthy parents. College is a reality for anyone who is willing to work hard and invest in their future. The Wisconsin Covenant says if you sign a pledge and live up to your end of the bargain, there is an opportunity for you to get a college education."

Secretary Gassman explained the Covenant pledge to the students, and encouraged them to sign up. The Wisconsin Covenant is a pledge to every eighth grade student: if they work hard in high school and make the grade, they will be assured a place in higher education and a financial aid package based on their family's federally-defined financial need. This year's eighth-graders are the first to sign the Covenant, and students have until September 14 to sign up. A copy of the Wisconsin Covenant can be downloaded online at [www.wisconsin covenant.wi.gov](http://www.wisconsin covenant.wi.gov), where more can be learned about the program and efforts to support students while they are in high school.

Like Governor Doyle, Secretary Gassman also denounced the Assembly Republican budget for compromising Wisconsin's future by cutting everything from public schools to higher education to health care to economic development. The Assembly budget cuts over \$162 million for University of Wisconsin campuses and financial aid programs across the state, reducing access for thousands of students. It also cuts nearly \$13 million for technical colleges, reducing funding for over 20,000 students seeking additional job skills and career skills training, and cuts public schools by nearly \$130 million.

Governor Doyle's budget, however, builds on his efforts to make college more affordable for working families. The Governor has more than doubled college financial aid over the last four years and his latest budget would triple aid.

"Financial aid is key to allowing more deserving students the opportunity to go to college," Secretary Gassman said. "But the Assembly cuts mean fewer students will have access to the university, and students will have over \$900 less in student aid over the next two years. I know how critical it is to our economy and quality of life that our kids go to college, receive an education and training, and help us build on a workforce that is second to none. We need to be increasing financial aid as Governor Doyle has proposed, not cutting it."