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Secretary Gassman Highlights Governor's Workforce Agenda, New Items to Expand Training Opportunities, Ensure Skilled Labor

Discusses New Grow Wisconsin Plan during Visit to Marten Machining in Stevens Point

STEVENS POINT – During a visit to Stevens Point today, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman highlighted Governor Doyle's *Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps* agenda as a crucial strategy to strengthen the state's economy in the face of national economic challenges. The Secretary also highlighted a new series of investments in Wisconsin's workforce that will keep the state moving forward.

"Governor Doyle's latest economic development plan will not only move our state forward and invest in long-term growth, but it also makes key investments in workforce development and training," Secretary Gassman said. "From providing Opportunity Grants to low-income workers to further their technical school education, to expanding Youth and Adult Apprenticeship, the Governor's strategies are exactly what we need to continue training our workforce and ensure businesses have the highly-skilled workers for tomorrow's jobs."

Secretary Gassman visited Marten Machining, which produces key components, tools and fixtures for manufacturers of medical equipment. The firm participates in Youth Apprenticeship, a program Governor Doyle is proposing to expand into three new demand occupations. An expansion would provide apprenticeship opportunities to 300 more high school students and allow 250 new employers to enter the program.

"Youth Apprenticeship has been a very popular and successful program from the start, providing students opportunities to explore career options and employers with apprentices and good recruits for full time jobs after graduation," Secretary Gassman said. "Governor Doyle fought hard to double funding and apprenticeship opportunities in the current budget, and he now wants to expand it further, adding programs in veterinary science, dental hygiene and construction. By making key workforce investments now, Wisconsin will remain the state with the best workers 5, 10, 15 years from now."

Secretary Gassman also noted other workforce development items in the Governor's *Grow Wisconsin* plan:

- **Opportunity Grants** – The Governor is proposing creating a \$1.5 million program to help low-wage workers who have high school diplomas increase their skills with training through the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). Grants of up to \$1,000 a year would be available for training in high demand occupations.
- **Minimum Wage** – The Governor proposes increasing the state's minimum wage, a raise that would benefit 230,000 workers, the majority of them women.
- **Skills Jump Start Pilot Training Grants** – The Governor has directed DWD and WTCS to use \$240,000 in Joyce Foundation funds to help adults lacking a high school diploma complete their basic education and get job training. The Governor will seek \$400,000 to pilot the program at technical colleges in his next budget.
- **Adult Apprenticeship** – To meet the increasing demand for skilled workers in the trades, the Governor proposes four new apprenticeships in plastics, printing, utilities and health care. The proposed \$300,000 investment would open apprenticeship opportunities for 1,000 more individuals.