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Secretary Gassman Announces Grow Grant to Train Skilled Workers for Bio-Tech, Advanced Manufacturing Firms in Southwest Wisconsin

In Janesville, Labor Secretary awards \$85,000, one of 10 grants in \$850,000 initiative

JANESVILLE – As part of Governor Doyle's \$850,000 Emerging Industries Skills Partnership initiative, Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced an \$85,000 grant to the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, funding to increase the job skills of at least 200 workers in the area's growing bio-industry and advanced manufacturing sectors.

The Emerging Industries Skills Partnership (EISP) is one aspect of Governor Doyle's **Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps**, a comprehensive strategy for economic and workforce development. The grant that Secretary Gassman announced on his behalf will leverage nearly \$106,000 in additional resources, providing total funding of just under \$191,000 for the project.

"Wisconsin's economy is doing better than many states, thanks to the Governor's earlier Grow Wisconsin initiative," Secretary Gassman said. "This funding and the other EISP grants will build on that success, ensuring a first-rate workforce with further investments in education and training. Advanced manufacturers need highly skilled machinists, for example, to compete at the high end in today's global economy. Biotechnology firms need lab technicians to assist in analysis and research. With this grant, we can meet the demand for these and other positions in our emerging industries."

In a visit to Blackhawk Technical College, Secretary Gassman announced the grant, one of 10 awarded under the Governor's \$850,000 EISP initiative to provide new and incumbent workers with the necessary skills in advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and renewable energy. As part of the region's training project, Blackhawk will soon launch a new Laboratory Technician Assistant program. After a year of training, graduates will be ready for entry-level jobs as medical, food or environmental science lab assistants that average \$14.25 an hour and with experience, \$19.50 an hour.

As outlined by Secretary Gassman, the grant will enable them to:

- Provide incumbent worker training for a minimum of 200 workers at 10 advanced manufacturing and bio industry companies throughout the region;
- Create pathways for rewarding careers in the both emerging sectors, with an advanced manufacturing focus on machining, maintenance mechanics, food processing and plastics production, and a bio-industry focus on lab testing, animal management and fuels processing;
- Strengthen collaboration between employers and training partners in both sectors.

Accepting the grant from Secretary Gassman on behalf of Bob Borremans, Executive Director of the Southwest Wisconsin WDB was Amy Charles, Director of business Services. Joining them were area legislators, Senator Judy Robson, Representatives Mike Sheridan and Chuck Benedict, as well as BTC President Eric Larson.