

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

201 East Washington Avenue

P.O. Box 7946

Madison, WI 53707-7946

Telephone: (608) 266-3131

Fax: (608) 266-1784

<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>

e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 11, 2008

CONTACT: Dick Jones, Agency Liaison, 608-267-4780

Secretary Gassman Convenes WIRED Leadership Caucus, Boosts Regional Effort to Prepare Skilled Workforce for Jobs of Future

Labor Secretary says Governor's Grow plan led to \$5 million federal grant

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today convened a broad coalition of leaders from 12 counties in southern Wisconsin and, with a \$5 million federal grant, set the group on a mission to ensure skilled workers in the region's high growth sectors and emerging industries.

"While our national economy is struggling, we see opportunities for good jobs and rewarding careers now and for years to come, right here in south central and southwest Wisconsin," Secretary Gassman said. "That's why it is so critical that we act now and invest in our people, as Governor Doyle has urged all along. The key to growth is a well educated and trained workforce with the right skills to compete at the high end."

Secretary Gassman convened the first meeting of WIRED Leadership Caucus, consisting of 24 members and 5 alternates, charged with forging new partnerships and creating long-term solutions to developing a skilled workforce in the region. Last year, the federal government awarded a \$5 million Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant to fund workforce and economic development efforts in the 12-county region over three years.

"In awarding this grant, the second \$5 million WIRED grant for Wisconsin, the federal government cited Governor Doyle's Grow Wisconsin plan, specifically its emphasis on developing regional strategies for growth, as a deciding factor," Secretary Gassman said. "The funding for the south central and southwest region will help provide skilled workers for high growth sectors and emerging industries, such as advanced manufacturing, health care, utilities, biotechnology, agriculture and the skilled trades."

The 12 counties are: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Jefferson, Iowa, Lafayette, Marquette, Richland, Rock and Sauk. Serving as chair of the leadership caucus is Jennifer Alexander, former DWD Secretary and now President of Thrive and the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce.

In 2006, a \$5 million WIRED grant was awarded to a seven-county region in southeastern Wisconsin.

The following is a complete membership list:

Jennifer Alexander, President, Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce and Thrive;

Jon Bales, Superintendent, DeForest Area School District;

Bettsey Barhorst, President, Madison Area Technical College;

Bob Barker, Executive Vice President, AGC of Wisconsin;

Wisconsin.gov

Ron Brisbois, Executive Director, Grant County Economic Development Corporation;
Heidi Carvin, District Administrator, Evansville School District;
Jim Cavanaugh, President, South Central Federation of Labor;
Kathy Cullen, Vice President of Teaching and Learning, Wisconsin Technical College System;
Paul Dietmann, Director of Farm Center, State Department of Agriculture;
Laura Dresser, Research Director, Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS);
Rich Gruber, Vice President, Community Development, Mercy Health Systems;
Kris Holmes, Employment / Diversity Manager, Meriter Health Services;
Marty Krueger, Chair, Sauk County Board;
Eric Larson, President, Blackhawk Technical College;
Anne Lutz, WPL Southeast Regional Director, Alliant Energy;
Don Madelung, President, Herzing College;
Deb Mahaffey, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Academic Excellence, Department of Public Instruction;
Mark Masters, Chair, Iowa County Board;
Dr. Duane Merlin Ford, Dean of Business, Industry and Agriculture, University of Wisconsin- Platteville;
James Otterstein, Economic Development Director, Rock County;
JoAnna Richard, Deputy Secretary, State Department of Workforce Development;
Scott Stocker, President & CEO, Shullsburg Creamery;
Howard Teeter, President, Anteco Pharma;
Margery Tibbetts, Attorney, Brennan, Steil & Basting, S.C.;
Phyllis Wihelm, Director of Economic Development, Madison Gas & Electric.

Alternates:

Richard Hands, Life / Health Product Design Consultant, American Family Insurance;
Gayle Hytrek, President, Moraine Park Technical College;
Karen Knox, President, Southwest Technical College;
Ann Miller, Marketing Director, Madison Symphony Orchestra.