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State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Jim Doyle, Governor
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

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American Legion Honors Department of Workforce Development for Leadership in Hiring & Supporting Disabled Veterans

National Award to be Presented at American Legion Convention in September in Milwaukee

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has been selected to receive national honors from the American Legion for its ongoing dedication to hire and provide support to disabled veterans.

The Award to Enhance the Lives of Disabled Persons confers national recognition on organizations for their efforts to enhance the lives of disabled persons, and DWD is being given particular recognition as an employer of the disabled.

“From our efforts to hire Wisconsin’s veterans to our excellent programs that help veterans succeed in the workplace, the Department of Workforce Development is committed to the success of those who have given so much to protect our freedom,” Secretary Gassman said. “On behalf of Governor Doyle, we are thankful to the American Legion for their ongoing support for our agency’s commitment to veterans.”

“The American Legion applauds the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development for hiring veterans, particularly those with disabilities, along with the job services, training and employment assistance they provide for veterans and their families,” American Legion Economic Division Chairman Randall Fisher said. “The American Legion strongly believes that hiring veterans is good for business and for the country. America’s veterans have sacrificed so much for the Nation; they deserve ample employment opportunities once they transition into civilian life. “

Secretary Gassman especially thanked Bruce Markert, American Legion Wisconsin State Employment Chair, for nominating the DWD for the national award. In his nomination, which was completed in collaboration with Ken Grant, state director of the DWD Office of Veterans Services, Markert praised DWD for its efforts to hire disabled veterans and to implement programs to help disabled veterans succeed in the workplace.

Since March 2009, DWD has hired 69 disabled veterans to help provide employment and training services to other veterans. Last year alone, DWD provided 8,000 veterans with employment and training services. The agency achieved a 60 percent job placement rate for veterans in search of employment, with placements at locations such as the Oshkosh Corporation and the Oak Creek Power Plant.

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"Having productive work to perform is a vital part of recovery for returning veterans," Wisconsin American Legion Commander Leo Endres said. "We are proud to honor the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development for everything it is doing to protect the interests of our working veterans and to help get them back to work with training and employment services."

These achievements were made possible in part through a \$553,000 federal grant Wisconsin received in fall 2009 to provide employment and training assistance to members of the Wisconsin National Guard returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, and other veterans searching for work. DWD has undertaken other efforts, such as the launch of 18 veterans' job fairs in communities across Wisconsin in 2010, and the identification of 260 job-ready disabled veterans for placement in various state agencies.

Secretary Gassman said the American Legion's award further showcases Governor Doyle's comprehensive agenda to serve veterans. For example, Governor Doyle has signed legislation to provide tuition-free education for veterans and to protect veterans from workplace discrimination based on military service obligations.

DWD will be recognized at the American Legion State Convention in Wausau on July 14-18, 2010. The American Legion's national award will be presented during a special ceremony September 1 at the 92nd Annual American Legion National Convention, which will be held in Milwaukee on August 31-September 2, 2010.