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## **Secretary Gassman Urges UW School of Social Work Graduates to Become Change Agents, Work to Improve Lives of Others**

### ***State Labor Secretary delivers keynote address at 2010 graduation celebration***

MADISON – Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman today called on graduates of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work to become new forces for change and work to improve the lives of others in their communities.

Secretary Gassman, a UW graduate honored recently with the school's 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award, addressed 500 graduates, family and friends at a graduation reception held in the Great Hall of the UW Memorial Union. In these challenging times, she said America needs the talent and skills of social workers more than ever.

"Our state and country need more engineers, entrepreneurs, skilled health care, energy and manufacturing workers, and more," Secretary Gassman said. "But we especially need more social workers as community builders, policy makers and researchers. We have families, students, patients, and communities to help through these challenging times. We all have the awesome responsibility to build America's future together."

Secretary Gassman expressed appreciation to the School of Social Work for the positive impact it had on her life, and encouraged students to regard their future career paths with optimism, particularly as the nation's economy moves into recovery.

"As social workers, you will have the power to improve people's lives," Secretary Gassman said. "Social workers are agents of change – change for the better, whether working with individuals, groups or large systems. We inspire community action and social change."

In April, Secretary Gassman received the school's distinguished alumni award. In honor of Secretary Gassman, the school also established the Roberta Gassman School of Social Work Opportunities Fund and the Roberta Gassman Distinguished Lecture Series. At her request, the fund will support policy research, programs addressing poverty and the needs of people with disabilities, recruitment and retention of students of color, and student achievement awards.

As DWD Secretary, she leads efforts to strengthen Wisconsin's workforce. With 1,645 employees, the agency provides employment and training services, works with employers to fill jobs, enforces workers' rights, and administers the Unemployment Insurance, Apprenticeship and Worker's Compensation programs.