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Note: *Photo of Interim Secretary Baumbach attached*

Wisconsin Apprenticeship Marks 100 Years of Empowering Workers

Column by Interim Secretary Scott Baumbach Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

At the Department of Workforce Development, we advance Wisconsin's economy through a leading workforce development system that attracts, creates and retains jobs, and empowers individuals to become self-sufficient.

We carry out this mission in part through a strong and vibrant apprenticeship program that empowers individuals to gain skills that employers need in the construction, manufacturing and service sectors, and to use those skills to succeed in good-paying jobs that will move our state's economy forward. And, by connecting private-sector employers with these skilled and talented workers, we are advancing Governor Walker's message that Wisconsin is open for business.

Wisconsin's apprenticeship program has maintained a commitment to worker empowerment through prosperous economic times and, recently, during the worst national economic downturn since the Great Depression. While our state continues to face difficult fiscal times, Wisconsin apprenticeship has played and will continue to play a vital role in our state's workforce system.

This year marks the centennial of Wisconsin apprenticeship, as our state passed the country's first apprenticeship laws in 1911. Built to meet the needs of apprentices and employers, Wisconsin's law became a model for other states and for the federal government.

Today's apprenticeship system combines real employment with classroom instruction and on-the-job training provided by skilled journey workers. Wisconsin has about 8,000 registered apprentices training and working in some 200 occupations statewide. Approximately 2,000 registered apprenticeship programs are currently in place.

Among the program's hallmarks is its emphasis on partnerships. Wisconsin's apprenticeship program is made possible through close collaboration between industry, management, labor organizations, government and educational institutions. Skilled journey workers serve on local apprenticeship committees, offering invaluable advisement to help shape and advance the program.

We are commemorating this 100th anniversary with efforts that culminate in the state apprenticeship program's bi-annual conference June 12-14 in Madison. Visit www.apprenticeshipcentennial.org for additional information and activities occurring this year that collectively will help illustrate Wisconsin apprenticeship's rich history.

If you're a jobseeker looking to become part of the apprenticeship tradition, or if you're an employer looking for more information on how apprenticeship can enhance the quality of your workforce, I encourage you to contact our Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards for more information and resources.

For the benefit of job creation and economic growth, DWD is committed to supporting the continued success of Wisconsin apprenticeship for another 100 years.

Additional Web Resources: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/>
<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/publications/dws/apprenticeship/apprenticebooklet.pdf>
http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/pdf/06_EmployerToolkit.pdf

