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Secretary Gassman says Youth Apprenticeship Path to Rewarding Careers *Highlights Governor's Opportunity Budget at Jefferson County Economic Summit*

Jefferson – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Roberta Gassman said today Wisconsin's Youth Apprenticeship program offers high school students a pathway to rewarding careers and their opportunities will double under the **Jobs for the Future** initiative in Governor Doyle's new budget.

"As our economy continues to grow and create jobs, we need workers in the skilled trades, health care and technology, all good paying jobs with benefits," Secretary Gassman said. "Youth Apprenticeship lets high school students explore these career opportunities, while gaining valuable job skills and work experience, and these opportunities will increase substantially under the **Jobs for the Future** initiative in Governor Doyle's budget."

Speaking at the Jefferson County Economic Summit, Secretary Gassman said that in Wisconsin, Governor Doyle wants every child to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them. She said Youth Apprenticeship provides an additional career path to students who may or may not be considering a college education. She said 78% of the Youth Apprenticeship students do go on to college or technical school, and 64% earn their degrees, compared to approximately 25% of the students nationally that succeed in earning a degree.

"Youth Apprenticeship helps high school juniors and seniors make career choices and helps Wisconsin ensure a first-rate workforce," Secretary Gassman said. "This successful program is popular with both students and employers. For all of these reasons, Governor Doyle wants to double Youth Apprenticeship opportunities."

The Governor's two-year budget doubles funding for the program to \$2.2 million in the second year, providing 4,000 students with school-to-work opportunities. Juniors and seniors in public or private schools can apply. They must enroll in apprenticeship related classes and be available for 10 to 20 hours of work per week during the school year. Students who maintain passing grades, learn requisite work skills and meet graduation requirements earn a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency and advanced standing in technical college or credit in selected University of Wisconsin System programs.

Secretary Gassman praised the Jefferson County School-to-Career Consortium for the success of a special Youth Apprenticeship program in manufacturing at the Briggs & Stratton Home Power Products plant in Jefferson. The program was designed for students who had lost interest in school and at risk of dropping out. In five years, 35 students succeeded as apprentices and earned their diplomas. Secretary Gassman recently visited the Briggs & Stratton plant and met students in the program, which is being expanded to include other manufacturers.

During her remarks, Secretary Gassman highlighted other aspects of Governor Doyle's opportunity budget for working families:

- A four-fold increase to \$8 million for Workforce Advancement Training grants, another element of the **Jobs for the Future** initiative. With the increased funding, the Wisconsin Technical College System can provide training and improve the job skills of 36,000 workers at 300 firms;
- A fiscally responsible, balanced plan to make Wisconsin the national leader in health care reform with coverage for all children and affordable health care accessible to virtually all citizens.
- Over a dozen tax breaks to help working families, saving \$1.7 billion in the next four years. They include a full deduction for health insurance premiums; college tuition deduction, including books and fees, saving families as much as \$400 a year; a child care tax deduction, saving parents up to \$400 a year; and an end to the state tax on Social Security benefits next year.