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Governor Doyle Proclaims October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month

MADISON – Governor Jim Doyle today proclaimed October National Disability Employment Awareness Month to recognize the substantial contributions workers with disabilities make every day in Wisconsin and to call on business, labor, and government leaders to collaborate to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

“National Disability Employment Awareness Month is an opportunity for us to highlight the talents and skills of job seekers and working Wisconsin citizens who have disabilities,” Governor Doyle said. “It also gives us a forum to draw attention to the many challenges to achieving economic self-sufficiency faced by people with disabilities who are not currently involved in Wisconsin's workforce.”

From October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2007, the Department of Workforce Development's (DWD) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and its local partners assisted 3,165 people with disabilities in entering the workforce – 113% of their goal. DVR is the state entity that provides employment services to people with disabilities.

Currently, there is no waiting list for DVR services for eligible applicants, but that could change soon if lawmakers do not pass a state budget, said DWD Secretary Roberta Gassman.

“Without a state budget, DWD would have to reduce its caseload for people with disabilities by nearly 1,000 and would likely be forced to place up to 2,000 more eligible applicants on a waiting list,” Secretary Gassman said. “The consequences of a no budget scenario are far-reaching, and would affect people all over the state. I urge the Legislature to continue working together, day and night, and continue making compromises to get a state budget agreement as soon as possible.”

DWD and DVR are celebrating National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October by emphasizing the capacities of citizens around the state. DVR has embraced the team concept as a way for all staff to work together toward common goals and to achieve their mission to obtain, maintain, and improve employment for people with disabilities. Throughout the month, DWD will feature DVR consumers who have made strides in achieving their employment goals on <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/>.

“Employment opportunities for people with disabilities can be a critical component in their ability to move from a life of dependency to a life of independence and inclusion in their communities,” Secretary Gassman said. “In partnership with other advocacy groups and businesses, DVR provides various programs and services that give choices to those needing assistance. We are very excited to highlight this month the many talents and abilities that individuals with disabilities bring to our state and communities.”

For information about employment and other services for people with disabilities in your area, contact your local DVR office at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/locations/default.htm> or local independent living center at <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/Disabilities/Physical/ILCs.htm>.