

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

201 East Washington Avenue

P.O. Box 7946

Madison, WI 53707-7946

Telephone: (608) 266-3131

Fax: (608) 266-1784

<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/>

e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

CONTACT: Dick Jones, Agency Liaison, 608-267-4780

Governor Doyle Announces Pilot to Retain Minority Apprentices in Milwaukee Construction Trades

WRTP/BIG STEP to Work with Milwaukee Area Employers, Provide Mentoring Services to African American Apprentices

MADISON – As part of his *Grow Wisconsin - The Next Steps*, Governor Jim Doyle announced today the start of an innovative pilot program to increase the retention and completion rates of African American apprentices in the Milwaukee area construction trades.

“This pilot will build on the progress we have already made in increasing minority participation in the apprenticeship program,” Governor Doyle said. “By working with employers and mentors, we can help ensure that African American apprentices stay in the program so they can learn lifetime skills and develop job security, while earning good, family-supporting wages.”

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is providing \$25,000 to WRTP/BIG STEP in Milwaukee to administer the pilot. WRTP will work with Milwaukee area employers to help retain African American apprentices throughout their apprenticeships, and provide mentoring services to increase completion rates.

“Since Governor Doyle took office, we have seen a growth of 133 percent in African American apprentices in construction,” DWD Secretary Roberta Gassman said. “But we know that statistically, minorities drop out at higher rates than other groups. That’s why it is so important that we work to keep these apprentices in the program, so they can complete their training and benefit from the high demand for skilled workers in the construction trades.”

“This pilot meets a real need in the Milwaukee community,” added Rep. Barbara Toles, a supporter of the initiative. “Historically minority apprentices have been under-represented in the construction industry, and this new retention pilot will help correct that imbalance.”

The pilot will provide services to employers and adult African American apprentices in the Milwaukee area construction trades, starting June 1, 2008, for one year. The pilot will serve as a replicable model that will help identify best practices and successful strategies for improving apprentice retention across the state.

The pilot is just one of several initiatives included in Governor Doyle’s latest *Grow Wisconsin* plan to increase opportunities in apprenticeship programs. Others include: expanding adult apprenticeships, expanding youth apprenticeships and connecting youth and adult apprenticeships.

WRTP/BIG STEP is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to preparing low-income, unemployed, and young workers for family-sustaining jobs in the Milwaukee area.

-30-

Wisconsin.gov