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STATE JOB SERVICE STAFF WILL STAY IN 22 JOB CENTERS

MADISON – Job Service and veterans staff will be stationed at two offices in each of the state’s 11 workforce development areas, for a total of 22 job center locations, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman announced today. Job centers are operated by regional workforce development boards and usually house multiple agencies offering a variety of services.

Gassman said she made the decision to staff two locations in each Workforce Development region in recognition of community feedback and the need for employment services, and to ensure sufficient geographic coverage for job seekers, veterans, employers and others needing assistance.

“DWD is committed to improving services and saving taxpayer dollars,” Secretary Gassman said.

“Mobile state staff will travel throughout the region on an as-needed basis so services can be provided to the entire area.”

The consolidation is part of a statewide plan to enhance services for job seekers, including veterans and those with disabilities, and employers, while reducing the overhead costs the state has been paying for rent and operating expenses at 38 job centers. Consolidations are estimated to save approximately \$350,000 per year. Federal employment and training funds, which pay for the services, have been cut by 73 percent between 1984 and 2004 when inflation is considered, according to a new independent analysis by the Public Policy Forum.

“We are making these changes in consultation with local service providers as part of a plan to transform our employment and training services to best meet the needs of Wisconsin’s workers and employers in the 21st century,” Secretary Gassman said. “Because our shrinking resources have been spread so thin, too little of our funding has been going into actually serving job seekers and employers with skills

assessment, career advising and training. Too much of our capacity has been consumed with overhead costs such as rent, computer lines and publications.”

As part of the state consolidation, Job Service and veterans staff will make regular visits to areas not immediately served by an office in the community. Staff will reach out to customers around the state through a variety of locations including technical colleges, community organizations and libraries. The consolidation will allow staff to reach more communities and more unemployed and underemployed workers.

Part of the money saved will go toward the development of a new virtual job center that will greatly upgrade the capabilities of the state’s current online job website. The virtual job center will offer features such as posting of resumes and job orders; initial screening of job candidates; online personal job search assistance and job interviews; online job fairs, workshops and seminars; and, videoconferencing.

The combination of consolidated offices, mobile staff, flexible office hours and the virtual job center will help all job seekers get connected to all of the assessment, re-training support and placement services they need.

To make sure the improvements are meeting the needs of communities and the public in the most effective and responsive ways possible, DWD will seek input on goals and performance standards from a new statewide Job Center Standards Workgroup and a new Virtual Job Center Advisory Committee. DWD will also create a new electronic newsletter to keep statewide stakeholders and other interested parties informed of planned changes and allow them to offer feedback.

After consolidation, approximately 150 DWD mobile Job Service and veterans staff will be assigned to 22 job centers around the state. The sites were selected based on population, workforce needs, available resources and efficiencies, including the availability of free or low-cost space. Consolidations will occur as leases expire, with most achieved by December 31, 2008.

Job Centers will be staffed by DWD Job Service and veterans personnel in the following 22 locations:

Workforce Development Area 1
Kenosha
Racine

Workforce Development Area 2
NE Milwaukee Job Center
SE Milwaukee Job Center

Workforce Development Area 3
Pewaukee
West Bend

Workforce Development Area 4
Menasha
Fond du Lac

Workforce Development Area 5
Green Bay
Marinette

Workforce Development Area 6
Wausau
Wisconsin Rapids

Workforce Development Area 7
Superior
Phillips

Workforce Development Area 8
Eau Claire
Rice Lake

Workforce Development Area 9
La Crosse
Tomah

Workforce Development Area 10
Madison
Jefferson

Workforce Development Area 11
Janesville
Fennimore