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Secretary Gassman: Apprenticeship Program Preparing Skilled Workforce for Jobs of Tomorrow in Clean Energy Economy

In La Crosse, State Labor Secretary salutes Dairyland Power for apprenticeship, clean energy efforts; addresses energy sector group at Western Technical College

LA CROSSE – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said today that under Governor Doyle's leadership, Wisconsin is poised to create thousands of clean energy jobs, and its model apprenticeship program offers individuals a clear path to these and other skilled jobs of the future.

"With the apprenticeship program, everyone wins," Secretary Gassman said. "Individuals earn a wage while learning the latest skills and gaining valuable work experience. Employers get skilled workers they need. Local communities prosper as our economy grows. It is one of our top job training programs."

In a visit to Dairyland Power Cooperative, Secretary Gassman said the cooperative has been a strong partner in the Apprenticeship Program since 1966. On Governor Doyle's behalf, she commended Dairyland Power for contributing to the program's success. She also cited its commitment to renewable energy.

"Governor Doyle's Clean Energy Jobs Act sets a renewable energy goal of 25 percent by 2025 in Wisconsin, and Dairyland Power already has set this goal for itself," Secretary Gassman said. "Through the Clean Energy Jobs Act, we have an enormous opportunity to create jobs and become energy independent. We need legislation that builds on our success, increases our renewable energy portfolio, creates jobs and puts Wisconsin at the forefront of the clean energy economy."

Governor Doyle's Clean Energy Jobs Act implements recommendations of his Global Warming Task Force to address climate change and grow the state's green economy. The comprehensive package would:

- Require use of renewable energy for 20 percent of Wisconsin's needs by 2020 and 25 percent by 2025. This will help keep more energy dollars in the state. Wisconsin currently spends \$16 billion per year on imported energy to heat homes and fuel cars and trucks.
- Increase energy efficiency and conservation efforts with graduated statewide electricity savings goals, leading to a 2 percent reduction in energy use by 2015 and annual reductions thereafter.
- Create at least 16,000 jobs by 2025, more than 1,800 in the first year, many of them construction jobs, according to new industry-recognized research. Economists and policy analysts estimate the package will create 800 to 1,800 new construction jobs per year through 2025 and more than 2,000 manufacturing jobs once the energy act provisions are fully implemented.

Secretary Gassman also addressed an energy sector group meeting at Western Technical College. With funding from the DWD Wisconsin Industry Partnership initiative, the group is analyzing the workforce needs of the region's energy sector and developing targeted strategies to meet them.

To learn more about the Apprenticeship Program, visit: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/>

To view the economic assessment of the clean Energy Jobs Act, visit: <http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/>