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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, September 23, 2010

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## **Nation's Workforce Leaders Highlight Skills Training to Grow Economy and Help Get Americans Back to Work**

***At national workforce conference in Wisconsin, over 25 states cite On-the-Job Training, other programs that are growing skills, growing jobs and growing America***

MADISON, Wisconsin – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today hosted workforce leaders from over 25 states to highlight their work in growing worker skills, growing jobs and getting Americans back to work.

"As our nation emerges from the worst recession since the Great Depression, we are on the front lines, helping workers back on their feet and back to work," Secretary Gassman said. "Today I am joined by my colleagues, leaders of state workforce agencies from across the country. Never before has our work been so important. We are helping workers build their skills, employers find skilled workers, and we are sparking hiring to grow the economy. We are here today to highlight these programs, tell the story of how we're helping to get America back to work, and to urge other job seekers and employers to use our services."

The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) is holding its annual three-day conference this week in Madison, Wisconsin, drawing leaders from across the country whose agencies oversee employment and training services, Unemployment Insurance, veterans services, one-stop job center partnerships, and other vital workforce programs.

Nationwide, these agencies served 26.4 million workers in 2008, and in 2009, given the recession, those served grew to over 37.8 million. States across the country, including Wisconsin, note that approximately 25 percent of the labor force has been served by state workforce programs over the last year.

The leaders took a break from the conference to attend a press event hosted by Secretary Gassman. At the news conference, leaders stood shoulder-to-shoulder in support of workforce programs such as On-the-Job Training, which this summer received \$75 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds from the U.S. Department of Labor. These new On-the-Job Training funds will help thousands of dislocated workers across the country get trained and re-employed in the coming months.

U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Hilda L. Solis announced the funding in June to jumpstart re-employment for thousands of dislocated workers by providing partial reimbursement to employers for training costs for new employees, while giving employees jobs and the opportunity to develop needed new skills quickly. In Wisconsin, over \$2.27 million will provide On-the-Job Training and jobs for over 400 workers.

"These On-the-Job Training funds provide a valuable incentive for our hard-hit private employers, helping them to hire additional workers sooner than they might have planned, given these challenging times," Secretary Gassman added. "The On-the-Job Training program is just one of many programs that our state and national workforce system is leading to put America back to work."

"To date 91% of Wisconsin's On-the-Job Training participants have gotten jobs, and 93% of them have retained their jobs," Secretary Gassman added.

(more)

Joining Secretary Gassman and the other national leaders, including officials from the United States Department of Labor, were Wisconsin workers and employers who have been and will be assisted by the On-the-Job Training program.

A number of Wisconsin employers have expressed interest in hiring new workers trained through this effort, such as Trek Bicycle, Land's End and UPS. Speaking for the Flambeau River Papers Company, which employs over 300 people in Park Falls, Wisconsin, Human Resources Manager Lynn Yancey noted that she started with the company as a former dislocated worker who went through an earlier On-the-Job Training program. "I have personally seen the career ladder benefits of the On-the-Job Training program at the Flambeau River Papers Company," Ms. Yancey said. "As we prepare for a major clean energy expansion in building our new biorefinery, we look forward to continuing to add new skilled workers with the help of this workforce service."

Wayne Matthiesen and Brian Nuetzel, owners of Matzel Manufacturing Inc, a new advanced manufacturing business in Milwaukee, have been using On-the-Job Training to grow their company and have committed to additional hiring with the support of this program. "We've invested heavily in a variety of complex computerized machine tools to produce precision products for our customers" the owners said. "This program is necessary for the future success of our new business to attract and train the skilled workers required."

Darcy Johnson, Controller with Matrix Packaging Machinery Inc. of Saukville, said: "Thanks to the On-the-Job Training program, we have been able to hire and train workers more quickly than we otherwise would have, including three individuals over the past three weeks alone."

Other state workforce leaders joined Secretary Gassman in voicing support for programs such as On-the-Job Training.

Rochelle Webb, Administrator for the Arizona Department of Economic Security and also NASWA's new President, said: "The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) supports legislation to strengthen On-the-Job Training and provide resources to upgrade the skills of the economically disadvantaged and dislocated workers, expand the capacity of small business, and create jobs. In particular, NASWA urges Congress to hasten passage of legislation to increase funding for this program. Locally, OJT programs help Arizona businesses to increase the skills of their workforce. On-the-Job Training offers a value-added service to employers and stimulates the local economy."

Karen Lee, Employment Security Commissioner for the state of Washington and outgoing NASWA President, said: "Rebuilding the nation's economy is hard work and we need to use every tool available. On-the-Job Training is a win-win for both employers and job seekers, and is a critical part of the employment services toolbox."

Les Range, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, said: "On-the-Job Training is the centerpiece of Mississippi's workforce toolbox. We've used the program to help existing businesses expand and to attract new business to the state. During the 2009 program year, we spent more than \$9.2 million for On the Job Training. Partnering with 400 employers, we were able to help nearly 4,000 workers. That year, Mississippi ranked first in the nation for On-the-Job Training successes."

Commissioner Colleen C. Gardner of the New York State Department of Labor, said: "Now more than ever in this tough economy, we need strong tools like the On-the-Job Training program and the HIRE Act to help put people back to work. "In New York, we have made a sound investment of \$6.2 million in On-the-Job Training funds available to businesses, and they are using that money to do what business does best: create jobs and innovate. Not only do businesses in New York use On-the-Job Training to hire new workers directly, they also use the money they save in training costs to create more jobs – jobs that wouldn't have been created without the On-the Job Training program."

Other states represented in support of workforce system programs include Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Gay M. Gilbert, Administrator of the Office of Unemployment Insurance in the United States Department of Labor's Division of Employment and Training Administration, attended today's conference. Leaders from Wisconsin's regional workforce development boards attended as well, including Francisco Sanchez, President of Waukesha-Ozaukee-Washington Workforce Development Inc. and until recently, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Workforce Development Association.

In Wisconsin, employers and workers interested in applying for On-the-Job Training and other available workforce programs can contact their local workforce development board through: [http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwdwia/PDF/wda\\_list.pdf](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwdwia/PDF/wda_list.pdf)