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## **Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin National Guard Team Up with Labor Union to Provide Veterans Pathway to New Careers**

*State leaders join President of United Association of Plumbers, Pipefitters & Sprinklerfitters to launch first Veterans in Piping training program in Midwest, third of its kind in the United States*

CAMP WILLIAMS – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman and the Wisconsin National Guard today joined United Association General President William P. Hite in announcing a new program to put Wisconsin veterans on a fast track toward new, high-paying careers in the piping trades.

The Veterans in Piping (VIP) program is being launched at Camp Williams in Juneau County in partnership with the United Association of the U.S. and Canada. The United Association will provide the instructors and training at no cost to participants. It will also guarantee those who successfully complete training with access to jobs as they continue their welding apprenticeship and advance toward journeyworker status.

“This initiative is the latest example of the extensive services that Wisconsin is offering to veterans, who have done so much for our country,” Secretary Gassman said. “On behalf of Governor Doyle, we welcome the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipefitting, Sprinkler Fitting Industry, as a new partner in providing veterans a career path to family-supporting jobs through our apprenticeship program.”

“This is a tremendous opportunity for our returning veterans, who have given so much to our nation,” said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin. “I commend the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipefitting, Sprinkler Fitting Industry and the Department of Workforce Development. We are proud to be part of a partnership aimed at helping National Guard members and all veterans develop new skills for new career opportunities. These veterans bring leadership, experience, and a strong Midwest work ethic to this new opportunity. Their future employers will find them an incredible asset.”

Following the announcement, Secretary Gassman signed a Memorandum of Agreement along with Col. Kenneth Koon, representing Brig. Gen. Dunbar, and United Association President Hite.

“Our service members give so much to our country,” President Hite said. “We want to ensure they have the training and support necessary for a successful career after their time in the military is through. Our vision of making the Veterans in Piping program available to men and women nationwide is happening with this much-anticipated expansion to Wisconsin.”

The United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipefitting, Sprinkler Fitting Industry launched the first Veterans In Piping training in Washington State under an agreement with the state National Guard two years ago. The only other Veterans In Piping program is at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base in California. With the agreement, Wisconsin’s Veterans In Piping program becomes the third in the nation and the first in the Midwest.

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The training program offers veterans from Wisconsin and surrounding states 20 weeks of free welding pre-apprenticeship training. The training will take place in facilities provided by the United Association located at Camp Williams. Individuals who successfully complete the course and earn a welding and rigging certificate will achieve second-year standing in the Wisconsin apprenticeship program, which DWD oversees.

DWD's Office of Veterans Services is recruiting veterans and National Guard and Reserve military personnel for the program. The first class of 16 trainees is scheduled to begin training in January 2011.

Wisconsin's plumbing, steamfitter and sprinklerfitter apprenticeships are five-year training programs. During that time, apprentices earn a wage while learning skills. Those completing the apprenticeship program become journeyworker piping industry.

With experience, the average journeyworker wage is about \$33 per hour or more than \$68,000 per year. DWD's Office of Economic Advisors estimates that there will be 340 openings per year for plumbers, steamfitters and sprinklerfitters through 2016.

For more information:

About the VIP program: <http://www.uavip.org/>

About DWD services for veterans: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/veterans/>

About the apprenticeship program: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/apprenticeship/>

- 30 -