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Governor Announces Manufacturing Summit on October 8

Governor Doyle today announced that he will hold a Manufacturing Summit on October 8 to highlight the needs of Wisconsin's manufacturing base, which has lost 56,000 jobs since January 2001. Revitalizing manufacturing is a key goal of Governor Doyle's Grow Wisconsin Initiative, which he announced on September 10.

"Wisconsin's manufacturing industry has been hit particularly hard by the recession," said Governor Doyle. "Every week we hear new examples of plants closing and jobs vanishing. It's a problem being repeated all across the industrial heartland. In the absence of national leadership, we need to do whatever we can in Wisconsin to help our manufacturers compete."

The Manufacturing Summit will call together business, labor, and education leaders to discuss what must be done on the state and federal level to address the needs of Wisconsin's manufacturing industry. It will be held on October 8 from 1-4 p.m. at the UW-Milwaukee Continuing Education Center, Suite 6000, located at 161 W. Wisconsin Ave in Milwaukee. Individuals interested in participating should contact Jill Hassenfelt at (608) 266-7493 or via email at jill.hassenfelt@gov.state.wi.us. Additional logistical details will be announced later.

The Manufacturing Summit is part of "Grow Wisconsin," Governor Doyle's action plan to get our state economy moving again. "My vision for Wisconsin is to compete at the high end, capitalizing on our strengths – technology, a commitment to quality, and above all, our highly skilled workforce," Doyle said. "But moving toward the high end doesn't mean abandoning our traditional industries like manufacturing – it means upgrading them so they can continue to be competitive."

The Summit will address issues affecting manufacturing, including: training, health care costs, regulatory reform, foreign trade pressures, and increasing productivity. It will also discuss some of the aspects of "Grow Wisconsin" that are aimed at manufacturing, including:

Establish a Manufacturing Competitiveness Program

The Governor has called for a new initiative to help a minimum of 50 Wisconsin manufacturers improve their productivity to become competitive by leveraging the full resources of the state. Working collaboratively, the Wisconsin Technical College System, UW System and Department of Commerce will launch this new initiative to help Wisconsin manufacturers improve their productivity and apply new technology.

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Expand Opportunities for Paper & Printing Through a Sustainable Forest Certification

Many large consumers of paper are demanding that the pulp being used to make their paper come from forests that are certified as managed in a sustainable way. These consumers, such as Time/Warner publishing are demanding "green" inputs into their products. Many of Wisconsin's paper mills rely on these consumers as key customers. The Governor has directed the Governor's Council on Forestry to develop a sustainable forest certification in order to protect the customer base of the state's forest product and printing industries.

Promote Exports to Assist Wisconsin Manufacturing and Agriculture

The Governor has directed the Department of Commerce to work with businesses to increase exports and attract foreign investment. Commerce is developing a Governor-led Trade Mission schedule to strategic markets. These missions will assist companies in entering a market for the first time or increasing their market share, and will meet with foreign companies that might consider Wisconsin as a location for a new investment. To help small and medium-sized companies increase access to international markets, Commerce opened a Pan-European Trade office in July and will soon open an office in our fastest growing export market, China, to help companies understand and sell to these markets.

Direct Training Funds to Achieve the Greatest Impact

In the past, the federal training resources provided to the state have not been used in a strategic fashion. Funds have been distributed to local workforce boards and through the Council on Workforce Investment with little direction provided with regard to their allocation. The Department of Workforce Development is working with local Workforce Development Boards to develop performance measures and goals that strategically allocate training dollars to increase the job skills of workers to compete for and secure high-wage industry jobs.

Focus Commerce Training Funds on Manufacturing

Governor Doyle has asked the Department of Commerce to focus training programs to help manufacturers upgrade the skills of their workforce. Commerce will direct at least 75% of their training funds to manufacturing companies. Hitting this target will make at least \$4,500,000 available over the biennium.

Compete for Higher Wage Jobs

Being able to offer free training to employers is a powerful incentive that Wisconsin lacks, making our training incentives less competitive than other states. The Governor plans to introduce legislation to create a \$10 million training fund to offer free training to companies that create significant numbers of new, high paying jobs or need to introduce new technologies to retain workers in a competitive world economy.

Announced last week, "Grow Wisconsin" is a comprehensive agenda of action to get Wisconsin's economy moving again, producing the kind of good paying jobs that permit people to support their families, buy a home, and enjoy the great life Wisconsin has to offer.

A copy of the "Grow Wisconsin" plan can be downloaded at <http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us>.