

Governor's State Workforce Investment Board

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US Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao Visits Kalispell

US Senator Conrad Burns sponsored the 21st Anniversary Montana Women's Conference in Kalispell July 29, 2004. Elaine Chao, Secretary of the US Department of Labor delivered the keynote address.

Prior to her appearance at the conference, Secretary Chao toured the Kalispell Job Service Workforce Center, visited with staff and patrons, and then held a meeting with: Pat Hulla, Assistant Manager, and Patti McCubbins of the Workforce Center; Virginia Sloan, Business Advocate; Kalispell Chamber of Commerce President Joe Unterreiner; Kathy Hughes, Vice President of Flathead Valley Community College; Kalispell Mayor Pam Kennedy; and Kelly Chapman and Pam Watson, staff of the Governor's State Workforce Investment Board.

During her meeting with workforce professionals, Secretary Chao expressed her commitment to pursuing best practices in reforming the workforce system to be demand driven by business. She also commended the Job Service Workforce Center and the Flathead Regional Business Center for their visionary efforts in serving the business customer. Secretary Chao told Pat Hulla she felt the unique workforce center and business center partnership was "a model", and that this kind of partnering fits the message she is trying to convey across the country.

Congratulations to the Flathead area for their exceptional representation of workforce development in Montana! ■



Joe Unterreiner, Mayor Pam Kennedy, Secretary Chao, Virginia Sloan, and Pat Hulla at the Kalispell Job Service Workforce Center, July 29, 2004.

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Upcoming Events:

August 21-24 NGA Chairs/Staff Meeting – Denver, CO

Sept. 1 - 2 SWIB Meeting, Helena Labor Day Report

Sept. 23 - 24 Arbitration & Labor Relations Conference Bozeman, MT

You will find a direct link to our newsletters on the official State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) website:
www.discoveringmontana.com/gov2/css/boards/

2004 Funding Cycle for Value-Added Producer Grant Program Announced

Announcement by: Rural Development

The 2004 Funding Cycle for the Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG) was announced June 15, 2004 in the Federal Register. The Value-Added Producer Grant program was authorized the Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-224) and the 2002 Farm Bill (P.L. 107-171).

The primary objective of the VAPG is to help eligible producers of agricultural commodities expand their customer base for their products or commodities and to ensure that a greater portion of the revenues derived from the value-added activity is available to the producer. The program seeks to help as many producers as possible. A dollar for dollar match is required, and grants may not exceed \$500,000.

Grants are available to independent producers, agricultural producer groups, farmer or rancher cooperatives, and majority-controlled producer-based business ventures interested in a competitively-awarded grant to fund one of the following two activities: (1) planning activities needed to establish a viable value-added marketing opportunity for an agricultural product (e.g. conduct a feasibility study, develop a business plan, develop a marketing plan); or (2) acquire working capital to operate a value-added business venture that will allow producers to better compete in domestic and international markets. Awards will be made on a nationally competitive basis, and this year the application deadline was July 30.

The funding notice may be accessed in the Federal Register at www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. The VAPG Program may also be accessed by visiting USDA's web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

Additional information may be obtained by calling John Guthmiller or Bill Barr at the MT USDA-Rural Development state office, 900 Technology Blvd., Suite B, Bozeman, MT 59771, (406) 585-2545. ■



President Signs Legislation to Stop State Unemployment Tax Act (SUTA)-Dumping

By: C. Harris, NASWA

President Bush has signed into law the SUTA Dumping Prevention Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-295).

SUTA dumping occurs when a new employer forms a new company and transfers some employees to the new company with lower tax rates for the purpose of avoiding unemployment taxes.

The new law includes language giving state unemployment insurance programs access to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH). ■



Pam Watson, Secretary Chao, Kelly Chapman, and Kathy Hughes at the Kalispell Job Service Workforce Center – July 29, 2004.

Profile of the Montana Worker - Montana's Labor Day Report To Be Delivered During SWIB Meeting

The Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Research and Analysis Bureau, will again release their Profile of the Montana Worker publication during the Labor Day Report to the Governor, held on September 2, 2004 at the State Workforce Investment Board meeting.

The meeting is held at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel and is open to the public. The Labor Day Report is scheduled to be delivered from 10:00 a.m. – Noon.

The report provides valuable labor market information to workforce agencies, professionals, business owners, and citizens of Montana. ■