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Ohio, Pennsylvania Governors Announce Nation's First Interstate Workforce Region

Columbus, OH – Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell today announced the designation of the nation's first Interstate Workforce Region, a collaborative plan to enhance the economic and workforce development initiatives of Northeastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania.

The Interstate Region includes Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull counties of Ohio, and Lawrence and Mercer counties of Pennsylvania. The designation is in accordance with the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and was recommended by Ohio's and Pennsylvania's Governor's Workforce Investment Boards.

"Regional collaboration is more important than ever as a driver of economic growth, especially in these challenging economic times," Strickland said. "We look forward to working closely with our partners in Pennsylvania on ways to more effectively and efficiently improve workforce development initiatives in these five counties."

"A workforce with the skills and training to succeed in the 21st-century workplace is essential, and Pennsylvania's local and regional workforce development partners are helping us realize that goal," Governor Rendell said. "The Interstate Region is a logical extension of our current workforce development strategies, and I am pleased that we can partner with Ohio to create and implement workforce strategies that will benefit the workforce and employers in our states."

This designation, effective January 1, 2009, provides a framework for collaborative planning, information sharing and coordination of services by Ohio's and Pennsylvania's economic and workforce leaders. These five counties share a common workforce, current and emerging industries, worker dislocations, and a common vision to accelerate economic and workforce development. Regional workforce leaders from Ohio and Pennsylvania are currently meeting to create initiatives to improve workforce development through the five-county collaboration.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 provides the framework for a national workforce preparation and employment system designed to meet both the needs of the nation's businesses and the needs of job seekers and those who want to further their careers. The Act emphasizes that training and employment programs must be designed and managed at the local level where the needs of businesses and individuals are best understood.