



# opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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news

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## GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES KEY EMPLOYER TRAINING GRANT FOR CRAWFORD COUNTY OIL REFINERY

### *Grant Will Retain 575 Jobs and Help Control Gasoline and Oil Prices*

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today a **\$475,000** Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP) grant to Marathon Ashland Petroleum in Crawford County as part of his *Opportunity Returns* initiative for Southeastern Illinois. The grant, distributed in equal portions for Fiscal Years 2004, 2005 and 2006, will ensure that Marathon's Robinson refinery remains open, retaining at least **575** jobs in the Southeast region. Marathon Ashland Petroleum will use the *Opportunity Returns* grant to train all **608** of their employees in new clean-fuel technologies in which the company has invested more than \$90 million. More of these types of grants will be a part of his *Opportunity Returns* program for the Southeast region – the Governor's pro-active, comprehensive plan that will be unveiled later this spring to promote economic growth and create more jobs throughout the region.

Keeping Marathon's Robinson refinery open will not just affect its employees. As one of only three oil refineries in Illinois, Marathon Ashland Petroleum is a key supplier of gasoline and oil to the state. The loss or decrease in production at this facility would significantly increase the logistical costs of gasoline supply in Illinois, which would adversely impact consumers at the pump. This ETIP grant, identified by Marathon Ashland Petroleum as a key to preserving the Robinson facility, is a major victory for the Southeast region and for consumers throughout Illinois.

"This Employer Training Investment Program grant is great news for everyone in Illinois," said Governor Blagojevich. "It achieves two major goals: first, we are retaining hundreds of jobs for the Southeast part of our state. Second, in the face of skyrocketing gasoline prices everywhere in America, we are taking an important step to keeping prices stable here in Illinois. And it's also vital that we provide worker retraining that will make Illinois residents more marketable and employable in the future."

The ETIP grant for Marathon Ashland Petroleum will be used for a variety of employer skills upgrades in areas including cross training, safety, emergency response, CPR, computer software, waste water certifications, and federal clean fuel initiatives. The grant was based on an agreement that Marathon will continue to invest in clean fuel technologies at their Robinson refinery.

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“*Opportunity Returns* is about retaining and creating jobs. By retaining nearly 600 jobs in the Southeast region, this grant is an outstanding investment. One of the most important initiatives we can take is to provide Illinois workers with the skills they need to compete and succeed in today’s high-tech workplace. When compared with the number of jobs we retain and create, ETIP grants are a great bargain,” said Jack Lavin, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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