State of Wisconsin
Department of Financial Institutions

Scott Walker, **Governor** Peter Bildsten, **Secretary**

September 7, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: George Althoff, Communications Director, 608-261-4504

State officials on hand to kick off Wausau blight elimination efforts

WAUSAU – Representatives of three state agencies joined City of Wausau officials on Wednesday (Sept. 5) to witness the demolition of a blighted house under the state's $1 million Strategic Blight Elimination Program. The demolition was the first of three that will be conducted in Wausau, which received $53,000 under the program.

Representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI), the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) joined Wausau Mayor James Tipple and other city officials at the event. DFI and DOJ each committed $500,000 in proceeds from the national mortgage settlement announced earlier this year to fund the program.

"Together, DFI and DOJ put up a million dollars to help take down abandoned, vacant properties like this one across Wisconsin," said DFI Secretary Peter Bildsten, who was in attendance. "Ten Wisconsin cities will benefit from this program, which should lead to neighborhood stabilization and improved property values."

DOJ Executive Assistant Steve Means said the program should also result in safer neighborhoods in those communities.

"Vacant, run-down houses often times can become focal points of criminal activity," Means said. "Eliminating some of these distressed properties should help communities improve public safety in the neighborhoods where the demolitions occur."

John Schultz, Director of Community Development, represented WHEDA, which is the administrator of the program.

Other cities to receive funds under the program are Milwaukee, Racine, Oshkosh, La Crosse, Stoughton, Baraboo, Granton, Monroe and River Falls.

###

Office of the Secretary
Mail: PO Box 8861 Madison, WI 53708-8861 Courier: 345 W. Washington Ave. 5th Floor Madison, WI 53703
Voice: (608) 264-7800 Fax: (608) 261-4DFI TTY: (608) 266-8818 Internet: www.wdfi.org