



Commissioner Brad Avakian  
Bureau of Labor and Industries

## COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE For April 13, 2009

Friends,

On Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> I joined Oregon Senator Ron Wyden in leading a roundtable discussion at the NECA-IBEW Training Center on how we can better help our veterans with the often-difficult task of finding a quality job after they return from active service. The discussion was robust and productive, with many different perspectives brought to bear on the issue: from active duty to civilian veterans, and from private sector to public sector, many constituent groups were in attendance to begin work on tackling this problem.

It was agreed that there are many difficulties that Oregon veterans must overcome. Whether it's reintegration into civilian life or finding a job that pays a family wage with good benefits, our dedicated men and women warriors need us to come together and offer creative solutions to these ongoing problems.

We also heard many good ideas: ensuring existing veterans preference laws are properly enforced and well-known; promoting the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and encouraging Oregon businesses to hire qualified veterans; working to better involve civilian veterans in the reintegration of returning warriors; reducing often-confusing bureaucracy; passing crucial civil rights legislation to make veterans a protected class from discrimination; and fully utilizing apprenticeship and training programs, like the ones offered at the NECA-IBEW Training Center. (for more information on apprenticeship and job opportunities for veterans, [click here](#))

Now we must take the next step. Here at the Bureau of Labor and Industries we stand ready to support our veterans through increased employment protections and job resources in both our civil rights and apprenticeship divisions. We also need to look at ways to increase and enhance services available to our veterans.

And we must act quickly, with conviction. Oregon's unemployment and underemployment are soaring to record levels, with the rates amongst veterans even higher. Oregon's veterans cannot afford to wait for us to address this problem.

I look forward to working with you over the coming weeks and months to move Oregon forward when it comes to taking care of our veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. Avakian".

Brad Avakian  
State Labor Commissioner

*The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and protect access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.*

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## **BOLI Legislative Update: Key Civil Rights Legislation On-The-Move**

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) has already advanced roughly 75 percent of our civil rights legislative agenda. Overwhelming majorities have carried BOLI bills from the Oregon Senate to the State House, where they await further consideration. From protecting Oregon veterans to ensuring compliance and conformance with federal regulations on several issues, BOLI's civil rights agenda is moving forward. What follows is a brief summary of several core issues we are currently working on:

- BOLI is already on its way to ensuring we can continue to process and investigate fair housing complaints for Oregonians here in Oregon. Updates contained in [Senate Bills 58 and 59](#) will ensure that we retain “substantial equivalency” with federal law.
- As part of our ongoing effort to streamline regulations and processes, BOLI is advocating for [Senate Bill 56](#), which clarifies the complaint signing process and will help expedite certain civil rights investigations. 90% of the Oregon Senate endorsed this common-sense improvement to the Civil Rights complaint procedure.
- We are also working to clarify ambiguous state laws relating to fees and deposits for service animals and the veterans preference in public employment. [Senate Bill 875](#) eliminates out-dated provisions regarding additional fees and excessive deposits for trained assistance animals and passed the Senate unanimously on April 7. [House Bill 2510](#) eliminates the 15 year cap on eligibility for veterans preference points and clarifies eligible positions so that BOLI can more efficiently verify that veterans are receiving the benefit they have earned.
- Highlighting our continued support for Oregon service members, BOLI is working with veterans advocates to establish a variety of employment protections for veterans, active service members, and their families. While we strive to strike a balance between workers rights and employer flexibility, Commissioner Avakian is particularly supportive of protecting service members from discrimination for taking time off to honor their service commitments. In that effort, [House Bill 3256](#) is the key legislation to move forward.
- BOLI is also working on Senate Bill 874, which would bring Oregon in full conformance with federal disability law. Recent changes to federal disability law mean that Oregon law needs to be revised to reduce confusion for both employees and employers. We expect the same bipartisan support for these changes will develop in Salem as it did in Washington, D.C. The legislation will be heard in committee on April 15.

If you wish to learn more about BOLI's civil rights legislative efforts, please call 971-673-0781. We look forward to keeping you up-to-date on these key efforts.

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## **Prevailing Wage Advisory Committee Review of PWR Survey Continues...**

The Prevailing Wage Advisory Committee (PWAC) is continuing its review of the Annual Construction Wage Survey. The PWAC has already held two meetings to begin this process and has another meeting scheduled for April 23, 2009. Future meeting dates are still to be determined.

Interested parties are invited to both attend PWAC meetings and offer comment on the survey process and methodology. Additional information about the survey and review process can be found at

[http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/PWR\\_Survey\\_Review.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/PWR_Survey_Review.shtml). Public comments be directed to the committee via email: [pwremail.boli@state.or.us](mailto:pwremail.boli@state.or.us)