



# Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

## Press Release

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### **BOLI Working to Help Oregon Veterans Survive Record Unemployment**

*With unemployment on the rise, BOLI is supporting programs and policies to aid veterans and get them back into Oregon's workforce*

**PORTLAND, OR-** Although unemployment in Oregon has risen to record levels, one story not told is the fact that an increasing number of Oregon veterans are also unemployed. According to the Oregon Employment Department, 12.1% of Oregonians are out of work and even greater numbers are either underemployed or have stopped searching for a job. For Oregon veterans, the situation is similarly dire.

"The unemployment rate amongst Oregon veterans is on the rise and these are tough times for our veterans," said Jim Booker of the Oregon Employment Department. "It will take hard work, teamwork and dedication to help Oregon's veterans back into the workforce."

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is working to reverse this trend for Oregon veterans. BOLI is dedicated to promoting the development of a highly skilled, competitive workforce in Oregon through apprenticeship programs and through partnerships with government, labor, business, and educational institutions. This includes creating opportunities for our returning men and women in uniform.

"BOLI is hard at work to raise awareness about this critical issue," said State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. "Oregon's veterans have served our country with commitment and dedication, and now it is our duty to return the favor."

What follows is a summary of BOLI's ongoing efforts in workforce development for Oregon's veterans.

#### **Apprenticeship Programs**

Oregon veterans can take the first step toward preparing themselves for a lifelong career in a highly-skilled and respected workforce through apprenticeship programs in a variety of occupations. Our veterans can return from having valiantly served our country to jobs with competitive pay packages, good health benefits, and strong retirement plans. With the help of the Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council, BOLI is working to place returning veterans in these quality apprenticeship programs. To learn more about BOLI-partnered apprenticeship programs for veterans, please [click here](#).

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*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.*

## **Work Opportunity Tax Credit & Veterans Hiring Preference**

Within the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is an expansion to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). Previously, Oregon businesses could receive a tax credit for hiring and retaining qualified applicants from a select number of traditionally underrepresented groups. The expanded WOTC now includes provisions to provide this same credit – up to \$2,400, or more for disabled veterans – to businesses which hire and retain qualified veterans.

Moreover, in 2007 the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 822, which creates new veterans hiring preferences for public sector employees in Oregon and which BOLI proudly enforces. This law requires public employers to provide preference to veteran or disabled veterans in a civil service hiring process if their evaluation is at least equal to a competing non-veteran. Moreover, in the current legislative session, BOLI is working to strengthen and clarify this preference for veterans seeking work in the public sector – a benefit they have earned through courageous service.

BOLI strongly supports both the expanded WOTC and veterans hiring preference, and is working to publicize these programs. As part of this effort, BOLI and Oregon Senator Ron Wyden recently held a roundtable discussion of veterans' unemployment and how the problem can be addressed.

To learn more about the WOTC, please [click here](#). And to learn more about veterans hiring preference, [click here](#).

### **Helmets to Hardhats**

In partnership with BOLI, the Helmets to Hardhats program works to place returning veterans into quality construction industry careers. Through apprenticeship programs, returning men and women warriors can transition into careers that pay a living wage with good benefits for their families. Using Helmets to Hardhats, interested veterans can learn more about careers in a large number of challenging, rewarding fields. To learn more about the Helmets to Hardhats program, please [click here](#).

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