



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor and Industries

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE - April 27, 2009

BOLI Civil Rights Division leads the way in fight for civil rights and fair housing

Friends,

In celebration of our state's commitment to fair housing and our fight to end unlawful housing-based discrimination, at BOLI's request Governor Ted Kulongoski declared April 2009 as Oregon Fair Housing Month. This [proclamation](#) reaffirms the initial promise we made one year ago, to remove all barriers to equal opportunity in housing in Oregon.

To commemorate this occasion, last week I traveled to Eugene to celebrate our state's observance of Fair Housing Month. Joined by members of the Oregon Fair Housing Council, Eugene City Councilor Chris Pryor, and other local leaders, I presented the proclamation and promised that the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) will continue to place fighting for civil rights and fair housing at the top of our priority list.

In these difficult times, Oregon's support for fair housing must be unwavering, and BOLI will continue to lead the way in our state's fight for civil rights.

As the Governor's proclamation notes, BOLI is leading the fight against unlawful housing discrimination, as "for the first time in 15 years BOLI's Civil Rights Division is investigating federal fair housing complaints in Oregon." BOLI has already begun to process more than 90 HUD housing discrimination cases this year.

BOLI is the chief Oregon agency charged with civil rights enforcement. Our Civil Rights Division protects your civil rights by investigating employment, public accommodation, and housing-based discrimination.

Fair Housing Month is an important time for reflection and action. While we must be proud of the progress we have made in civil rights and fair housing, we must also be aware of how much work there is left to do. Millions of Americans still face housing-based discrimination and it's our responsibility to fight this wrong.

Join us in working to raise awareness for this critical cause throughout Oregon. We will keep you informed about upcoming events in celebration of Fair Housing Month, and the progress we make on our civil rights legislation and programs.

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.

Commissioner Avakian Expresses Concern Over Potential Changes to Prevailing Wage Rate Law

Commissioner Brad Avakian released a statement last week expressing his concern over proposed changes to prevailing wage rate law in Oregon HB 2430.

Currently under consideration in the Oregon House, HB 2430 would allow the affordable housing exemption to also be applied to certain “mixed-use” developments with an affordable housing component. Current law does not allow for any portion of a “mixed-use” project, a project comprised of both commercial and residential components, to be exempt from prevailing wage law.

“While I support the exemption from PWR law for strictly affordable housing projects, I fear this legislation moves us in the wrong direction by exempting additional projects and rolling back laws that ensure living wages for Oregon workers,” Commissioner Avakian said.

“Under 2007’s HB 2140, purely residential affordable housing projects were exempted from prevailing wage law,” continued Avakian. “The current law is both fair to workers in its application and clear to contractors and project owners in its enforcement.”

Avakian further explained how his concern stems from fairness issues and applying prevailing wage law to part, but not all, of a single construction project. Specifically, he noted that the proposed legislation could create situations in which a worker on a job site earned one pay scale for work on the first floor and an entirely different pay scale, for the same work, on the second floor – or situations in which two workers on a job earn different amounts simply because they are working on different floors of the same building.

To read Commissioner Avakian’s full statement on his concern over HB 2430, please [click here](#).

Mark Your Calendars: Women in Trades Career Fair 2009 May 14 - May 16

From May 14 to May 16, the Women in Trades Career Fair 2009 will take place at the NECA/IBEW Electrical Training Center in East Portland. The Fair is a great chance for women interested in careers in the skilled trades to learn about paid apprenticeship programs and job opportunities. Current tradeswomen will be on-hand to share their perspective and experience in working in construction, mechanical, utility, and other trades.

On May 14 and May 15, the Fair will welcome local middle (14th) and high-school (15th). Interactive, educational workshops will provide students the chance to learn about successful careers in the trades.

May 16, the Fair’s Careers for Women Day, is free and open to the public. The event begins with a free “Dad’s & Daughters” breakfast featuring State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian – please RSVP to 503-335-8200 or info@tradeswomen.net. Throughout the day, childcare, free parking, and a shuttle from the Gateway Transit Center will be provided.

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The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is proud to work with the Oregon Tradeswomen to increase the number of women in the trade workforce and to raise awareness about the opportunities that exist for women in many trade industries. For more information about the Women in Trades Career Fair 2009, please [click here](#).

Moreover, BOLI supports the work of the Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council (OSATC) to develop comprehensive strategies to address recruitment and retention issues with women and minorities in trades. To those ends, the OSATC has created an Affirmative Action Task Force comprised of leaders from many industries and professions with an interest in apprenticeship. If you are interested in learning more about the OSATC or its efforts to increase the presence of women and minorities in the trades, please call BOLI's Apprenticeship and Training Division at 971-673-0760.

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