



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor and Industries

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE - May 11, 2009

State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian Appoints Oregon Council on Civil Rights

Friends,

I am pleased today to announce the creation of the Oregon Council on Civil Rights (OCCR). There is a need for a greater effort to address the causes and effects of discrimination in Oregon, and this Council will work closely with BOLI and its Civil Rights Division over the coming months and years to fight for better education on and enforcement of civil rights.

Our effort will bring together leaders from communities across the state to take an important step in Oregon's fight against discrimination. The OCCR's mission will be to work with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to build partnerships among community civil rights organizations, to enhance the relationship between the state and these same organizations, and to offer advice on all matters related to the education and enforcement of civil rights in Oregon.

To fulfill its mission, the OCCR and its members will work toward several goals. They will study and monitor the causes, effects and solutions to unlawful discrimination in Oregon. They will consider and propose legislative and agency-based actions and solutions. They will foster communication, goodwill, cooperation, and conciliation among groups interested in civil rights across the state. And, they will advise the state on policies and procedures related to civil rights.

We have assembled a diverse team of Oregon civil rights leaders to serve on the OCCR. They bring decades of experience in fighting for stronger civil rights and represent a wide cross-section of communities. Co-chairing the Council will be James Mason, Diversity Education and Cultural Competency Director for Oregon's Providence Health, and Connie Ashbrook, Executive Director of the Oregon Tradeswomen. To view the full OCCR membership and read a short biography about each member, please [click here](#).

I look forward to convening the OCCR's first meeting in July. **Working with BOLI's Civil Rights Division, I am confident that the OCCR will be a key player in advancing Oregon civil rights and fighting unlawful discrimination in all its forms.**

To learn more about the OCCR, its members, and purpose, please [click here](#).

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.

Employment Questions about Swine Flu?

BOLI's Technical Assistance for Employers Program is fielding many questions from concerned employers about H1N1, commonly known as Swine Flu.

To assist employers the TA Program has prepared a FAQ for employers with answers to the most common questions we are hearing on Swine Flu. These include questions about employees returning to work, employee compensation for time spent away from work, an employer's rights to send sick employees home from work, and about how OFLA and FMLA are affected by Swine Flu.

Please [click here](#) to read the FAQ. If you have further questions, please contact BOLI's Technical Assistance for Employers Division at 971-673-0824.

BOLI Technical Assistance for Employers Program Spotlights in Salem Statesman-Journal

On Sunday, May 3rd, the Salem Statesman-Journal featured a column from State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian on the importance of BOLI's Technical Assistance for Employers Program (TA).

Commissioner Avakian's column featured high praise from businesses and professionals who have used TA. For example:

"Every interaction I have had with a TA staff member has been positive. They are knowledgeable, professional, friendly and use each opportunity to educate employers on employment law. I come away from every telephone call with a better understanding of the law and more confident assisting our staff in reaching resolution with personnel issues." — Angela Sword, HR Manager, Oregon Child Development Coalition

Despite the demand for BOLI TA being at an all-time high, the program receives no tax dollars to support its services. Instead, they are supported by revenue generated from handbook sales and seminar fees. Unfortunately, the program does not generate sufficient revenue to support itself. Given the tough economic challenges and new and emerging employment law issues faced by Oregon businesses, TA services are more important now than ever before.

Regardless, BOLI and TA are more committed than ever to their core mission, to helping Oregon employers navigate employment law.

To read Commissioner Avakian's full column from the Salem Statesman-Journal, please [click here](#). If you wish to learn more about TA and what it offers, please call (971) 673-0824 or visit www.oregon.gov/BOLI/TA.

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Prevailing Wage Advisory Committee Continues Review of Annual Construction Wage Survey

The Prevailing Wage Advisory Committee (PWAC) is continuing its review of the Annual Construction Wage Survey. The ongoing participation of affected stakeholders and union representatives has been an invaluable part of the process and is much appreciated. This is an important process that could have a substantial impact on prevailing wages statewide.

Commissioner Avakian initiated this process in order to ensure maximum effectiveness, promote survey accuracy and increase confidence in data validity. The process is not an easy one, however, as many of the issues that contributed to the difficult system of setting prevailing wages are being discussed for the first time and ideas about how to best reform the system are coming from both contractors and unions.

This participation by all affected is very much encouraged and desired. For example, a number of union representatives and business managers have already met with the Commissioner and BOLI staff to gain a better understanding of the survey methodology and the most recent survey data in their regions; in particular Tim Nicol with the IBEW Local #280 and Kevin Jensen with the Ironworkers Local #29, have become very knowledgeable about the survey process and have been effective advocates for a reliable system that protects the prevailing wages of their membership.

Again, this participation and understanding is essential to ensuring quality results from the survey review. If others are interested in learning how they can best participate in this process, please visit: http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/PWR_Survey_Review.shtml or contact the Commissioner's office at 971-673-0781.