



Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

For Immediate Distribution

June 15, 2009

CONTACT: Ben DuPree 971-673-0828; Kate Newhall 971-673-0786

Brad Avakian on Oregon's May Unemployment Numbers

Labor Commissioner comments on unemployment rate; notes encouraging bright spots

PORTLAND, OR- Today, State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian released a statement on Oregon's latest unemployment numbers. According to the state Employment Department, May saw a 12.4% unemployment rate in Oregon, which is the highest it has been in nearly 30 years. In response, Commissioner Avakian noted the tough times ahead, but also sees encouraging signs going forward and notes how the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is prepared to meet the challenges of a down-but-recovering economy:

"Today's new unemployment figures show that, despite strong action from our leaders in Salem and Washington D.C., it will take time to come through this economic downturn. Here at BOLI, we are seeing these hard times first-hand, as people are relying on our services even more. Claims to our Wage and Hour Division are up, as are calls and e-mails to our Technical Assistance for Employers program. Unfortunately, the state budget crunch also necessitates reductions to BOLI staff and services, challenging us to meet an increasing demand with fewer resources.

"But just as every cloud has a silver lining, this sobering news is not without encouraging bright spots. For example, in today's report, the Employment Department found that the construction industry bucked previous trends and added nearly 2,000 jobs. Every major construction industry saw some measure of growth. As I have said before, if we continue to make smart investments in job creation, education, and quality workforce development and apprenticeship programs, we can put Oregonians back to work and ensure that workers are prepared with the skills to obtain the high-wage, high demand jobs of the future.

"Likewise, while BOLI is experiencing tough times, we knew the shortfall was coming, and have been responsibly preparing for it. BOLI will continue to enforce civil rights laws, provide technical assistance for employers, and fight to protect employment rights and advance employment opportunities. It will take superhuman efforts from everyone – but we'll do it because Oregonians need us to do it."

#####

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.