



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor and Industries

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE - July 21, 2009

Oregon Council on Civil Rights meets for the first time, begins to address state's ongoing pay inequity

Friends,

At their inaugural meeting last Thursday, the new Oregon Council on Civil Rights got right to work, as I presented them with their first assignment: developing an action plan to address the issue of equal pay for equal work. Historically, Oregon women and minorities have earned less than their white, male colleagues and co-workers, and today Oregon still ranks only 25th in women's median earnings, and worse when it comes to minorities.

Equal pay for equal work is a complex issue that we must address if we want to move Oregon civil rights forward. And I believe that this new Council is well-suited to tackling this challenge because it brings together civil rights leaders from across Oregon and will increase collaboration, outreach, education and partnerships between state enforcement efforts, advocacy groups, employers and citizens.

Co-Chairs James Mason (Providence Health Systems) and Connie Ashbrook (Oregon Tradeswomen) believe like I do that continuing pay disparities between workers doing the same job are an obstacle to dealing with other civil rights issues. And I am certain that they will lead our new 25-member body with passion and dedication as they tackle unlawful discrimination and work to extend civil rights to all Oregonians.

Beyond beginning to discuss equal pay for equal work, the Council spent its first meeting reviewing Oregon's civil rights laws and recent legislative changes and learning how BOLI's civil rights enforcement process works. Each member also gave a brief introduction of their background, experience in civil rights, and let the Council know what issues they will want to work on in the coming months and years.

I look forward to working with the OCCR as they address the issue of equal pay for equal work and other important civil rights matters. I am confident that the team we have assembled for the OCCR will be a key player in advancing civil rights in Oregon and fighting unlawful discrimination of all forms.

To learn more about the new OCCR, including a detailed biography of each Council Member, please visit <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI/CRD/OCCR.shtml>.

Sincerely,

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

Brad Avakian
State Labor Commissioner

New Wage & Hour Handbooks Arrive! And Upcoming Technical Assistance for Employers Seminars

The 2009 version of the Wage and Hour Handbook is now available for purchase. Prepared by BOLI's Technical Assistance for Employers (TA) program, the handbook gives employers comprehensive information on wage and hour laws, including minimum wage, overtime, deductions, rest and meal periods, and child labor. This is a great resource for Oregon employers with answers to wage and hour questions from Oregon's wage and hour enforcement agency. The cost is \$40 plus shipping and handling.

The order form is available on our website at www.oregon.gov/BOLI/TA under Publications. Please keep an eye out for the Family Leave Laws Handbook, which is scheduled for release in late August.

In case you need further questions answered on several topics in employment law, here is a list of our upcoming TA seminars. To reserve your spot today, please [visit our website](#) or download a [registration form](#). Please call 971-673-0824 with additional questions.

July 2009 Seminars

Portland –Effective Supervisory Practices (July 21); Advanced Leave Laws (July 30)

Eugene – Wage & Hour Laws (July 28)

August 2009 Seminars

Portland – Payroll Issues (August 4); Policywriting Guidelines/Effective Employee Evaluations (August 6); Employee Supervision, Two-Day Training (August 19-20); Wage & Hour Laws (August 25)

Eugene – Advanced Leave Laws (August 18)

Medford – Effective Supervisory Practices (August 20)

Roseburg – Wage & Hour Laws (August 19)

Salem – Leave Laws in Oregon (August 12)

BOLI Provides Key Services for Medford, Southern Oregon

While budget reductions have forced the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) to close its Medford-based Southern Oregon office, BOLI's crucial, core services remain available and accessible to Southern Oregon residents. Although budget short-falls necessitated closing the Medford office, other positions lost over the past decade were restored to BOLI's budget and will enhance BOLI's ability to provide services to all Oregonians. Southern Oregon residents can continue to expect prompt responses from BOLI for civil rights protections, wage and hour enforcement, and technical assistance services for employers.

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.

Closing the Medford office was an extremely difficult choice necessitated by budget cutbacks. But closure of this office does not mean that Medford and Southern Oregon residents have lost BOLI services. BOLI made the choices necessary to best serve all Oregonians and to continue the enforcement of all laws under its jurisdiction. From protecting civil rights to helping businesses succeed and thrive, the agency remains committed to serving the people of Southern Oregon.

Despite cutbacks, BOLI fought for and won crucial funding restorations from the Legislature to restore several positions that had been lost over the past 10 years and have significantly impacted BOLI's enforcement capacity. While the Medford office has been closed, BOLI received funds to restore investigative positions lost over the years, to restore the Medford-based apprenticeship representative and to increase outreach by the Technical Assistance for Employers Program in Southern Oregon. Southern Oregonians with civil rights, wage and hour, or technical assistance questions should now call BOLI's Portland office at 971-673-0761 or visit us online at <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI/>.

Annual Prevailing Wage Rate Survey Postponed for Review

Consistent with the recommendation of the Prevailing Wage Advisory Committee (PWAC), Commissioner Avakian has postponed this year's Annual Construction Survey, which is used to establish Oregon's Prevailing Wage Rates each year. The PWAC is currently in the process of reviewing the survey and will be making recommendations to improve survey accuracy and increase confidence in data validity. As the PWAC reviews the survey, and considers major changes to survey methodology, it made a unanimous recommendation to the Commissioner to postpone the current survey. Postponing the survey enables PWAC additional time to make recommendation on improvements before the next Annual Construction Survey is conducted.

The State Labor Commissioner is charged by law with establishing prevailing wage rates for construction trades in Oregon each year based on the data collected from this survey. Because of the importance of the survey to this process, Commissioner Avakian tasked the Advisory Committee with reviewing the survey and making recommendations for improvements in order to ensure that we have the best product and data possible.

To read the full text of Commissioner Avakian's letter on the postponement of the prevailing wage rate survey, visit:

http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/docs/survey_postponement.pdf

The ongoing participation of affected stakeholders and union representatives is an invaluable part of the process and all interested parties are encouraged to participate in the process and respond to the specific questions posed in the postponement letter. If you are interested in learning more about the survey review process or would like to offer your comments, please visit:

http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/PWR_Survey_Review.shtml or contact the Commissioner's office at 971-673-0781.