



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor and Industries

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE - August 3, 2009

Interagency Workgroup's Final Report provides solutions to many of the technical, legal complications facing Oregon Domestic Partners

Friends,

Last year, I convened an Interagency Workgroup on Oregon's Family Fairness Act (OFFA) to tackle a number of legal and technical questions that newly registered domestic partners may face. After months of work, the Workgroup has issued its final report and "go-to manual" on domestic partnership issues.

Enacted in 2007, the OFFA provides Oregon's same-sex couples and their families with many of the same rights and protections previously available to couples only through marriage. However, because the OFFA did not alter existing marriage law and created a separate statute for domestic partnerships, the OFFA created a number of questions about consistency and parity for domestic partners in the areas of family law, estate and gift taxes, health care and insurance coverage, employee benefits, state and federal taxes, property, and retirement benefits.

I convened the Interagency Workgroup on Oregon's Family Fairness Act in October 2008 after being approached by Basic Rights Oregon to resolve these issues, which involved multiple state agencies and enforcement entities. Workgroup participants included representatives from: the Department of Revenue, the Department of Human Services, the Bureau of Labor and Industries, the Public Employees Retirement System, the Department of Consumer and Business Services, the Department of Justice, the Governor's Office and Basic Rights Oregon. Basic Rights Oregon was a key contributor to this workgroup having identified many of the issues facing registered domestic partners in Oregon.

By bringing together state enforcement agencies and domestic partnership advocates, the workgroup was able to sort through a number of complex issues and resolved several legal questions facing domestic partners. The workgroup has, and will continue to, improve the domestic partnership process for same sex couples in Oregon.

In some instances, however, federal law prevents Oregon from completely resolving an issue. The workgroup agreed that, in these instances, better notification and education could minimize the impact of federal restrictions. Toward this end, the workgroup developed an educational brochure, produced by the participating agencies, which will be given to all new domestic partners to alert them to potential issues relating to name changes, will and estate planning, parental rights, and tax implications. Brochures will be mailed to every registered domestic partner in the state and will also be distributed to new domestic partners by county clerks. To read the final report, 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.

Commissioner's Coastal Tour Highlights Law Changes, Services to Oregonians

State Labor Commissioner touts BOLI services to employers, employees, job seekers

Commissioner Brad Avakian toured the North and Central Coast last Friday, July 31st, to speak at a series of town hall and Chamber of Commerce meetings. With the recent conclusion of the 2009 legislative session, several [newly enacted changes to labor and employment law](#) made the Commissioner's visits very timely.

Intended partly to educate and partly to raise awareness about BOLI's multi-faceted work on civil rights and labor and employment issues, the Commissioner spoke to community members in Seaside, Tillamook and Lincoln City about services and protections provided by BOLI and encouraged employers and employees alike to utilize BOLI as a resource.

BOLI offers a range of services to Oregonians that are particularly important during tough economic times: from defending civil rights to ensuring timely payment of workers' wages, and from apprenticeship training to technical assistance for employers, BOLI's work is critical to getting Oregon's economy back on track.

In the coming weeks and months, the Commissioner will be making similar trips to Southern Oregon, Eastern Oregon and through the Willamette Valley. If you are interested in having the Commissioner address your group or attend a community meeting, please contact Bob Estabrook in the Commissioner's Office at 971-673-0781 or via email at bob.estabrook@state.or.us.

BOLI SEMINARS FOR EMPLOYERS: 11 Counties in 11 Weeks

Technical Assistance Program set for 30 seminars before year's end

The Bureau of Labor and Industries' (BOLI) Technical Assistance for Employers Program (TA) is keeping Commissioner Avakian's promise to maintain a BOLI presence throughout Oregon this year, including offering employer assistance seminars in 11 different counties during the 11 weeks starting August 10. Many of the 30 seminars scheduled over the next 5 months will be in Multnomah County, but a range of seminar offerings, from leave laws and supervisory practices to wage and hour laws and payroll issues, will be coming to Lane, Marion, and Polk Counties as well as select seminars in: Baker, Coos, Douglas, Jackson, Malheur, Tillamook, and Umatilla Counties.

Although fewer seminars are scheduled because of the holidays in November and December, **mark your calendar now for BOLI's 25th Annual Employment Law Conference: December 9-10, 2009.** The annual conference includes training sessions on all of the exciting and evolving issues in labor and employment law, conducted by BOLI's expert staff and some of Oregon's premier experts in employment law and human resources. The two-day conference is the best bang for your training budget bucks, and is an even better deal with early bird registration, opening September 15.

For a complete schedule of TA's seminar offerings, [click here](#).

A range of helpful resources for employers can be found on TA's website: www.oregon.gov/boli/ta.

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