



# Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

## Press Release

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### **April 2009 Declared Oregon Fair Housing Month**

*State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, Oregon Fair Housing Council, Eugene city leaders kick off observance by celebrating the proclamation*

**EUGENE, OR-** Today, State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian joined Eugene City Councilor Chris Pryor, the Oregon Fair Housing Council, and other local leaders in celebration of Governor Ted Kulongoski's declaration of April 2009 as Fair Housing Month in Oregon. At an event in downtown Eugene, people came together to show their support for civil rights and fair, affordable housing.

"Today we reaffirm our commitment to fair housing and civil rights for all Oregonians," said Commissioner Avakian. "Thanks to the dedication of leaders like Governor Kulongoski, your Mayor Kitty Piercy, and Councilor Pryor, and due to the ongoing efforts of the Fair Housing Council, this is a very important time."

First declared in April 2008, Fair Housing Month celebrates Oregon's commitment to civil rights and to protecting Oregonians from housing-based discrimination. At today's event, Commissioner Avakian and others present received the proclamation, joined in celebration, and spoke about the importance of fair housing free from discrimination.

The event also featured a reading of Claudia Fries' children's book *A Pig Is Moving In*, which introduces the concepts of tolerance, discrimination, and understanding to our youth. For Councilor Pryor, that is an especially important cause given the challenges we face. It also serves a reminder of how, despite making significant process over the last few decades in the fight for civil rights and against housing discrimination, there is much work left to be done.

"Millions of people still endure housing-based discrimination across our country," noted Councilor Pryor. "In light of that, it's all the more important to teach tolerance and understanding to our children, and that we are here to recommit ourselves to increasing awareness about this cause."

Also of note is the fact that for the first time in 15 years, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) now investigates cases of fair housing discrimination under a contract with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This contract allows complainants in Oregon to have their cases investigated locally, rather than from HUD's regional office in Seattle, which means shorter investigation times with greater accessibility to the process for complainants and respondents. This year alone, BOLI has processed almost 90 HUD housing discrimination cases through this contract.

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*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.*

“Processing and prosecuting cases of housing discriminating is a big step for our agency’s Civil Rights Division,” said Avakian. “With our new HUD contract, we can truly honor Fair Housing Month by being even more responsive to potential housing-based discrimination throughout our state.”

BOLI’s Civil Rights Division enforces laws granting job seekers and employees equal access to jobs, career schools, promotions, and a work environment free from discrimination or harassment. It fields about 25,000 inquiries investigates nearly 2,200 cases each year. For more information on BOLI Civil Rights, please [click here](#).

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