



Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

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BOLI Resumes Investigation of Fair Housing Complaints

After 15 years, the Bureau is again investigating federal fair housing complaints in Oregon

PORTLAND- For the first time in 15 years the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is again investigating federal fair housing complaints in Oregon. Since 1992, complaints based on federal fair housing laws have been routed to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) regional office in Seattle.

"Investigations conducted closer to home tend to provide for a smoother process for both the tenant and the landlord, who need to be close to their investigator and case proceedings," said Moloy Good with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon. He went on to say, "We also expect investigations will be processed in a timelier manner. Some Oregonians have waited upwards of 2 to 3 years to have their claims heard in Seattle."

Legislation passed in 2007, and further amended in 2008, enabled BOLI to investigate these cases under contract with HUD. The federal agency contracts with state governments, and provides funding to them, to enforce their housing discrimination laws if their programs are substantially equivalent to federal law. This program is referred to as the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP). This March, after passage of the final piece of enabling legislation during the supplemental legislative session, HUD certified Oregon's standard and awarded BOLI with a contract to begin investigating cases in the Bureau's offices around the state. Since May, HUD has referred 23 fair housing cases to BOLI that would otherwise have been investigated from Seattle, far from the landlord or tenant.

"BOLI is proud to again take a leading role in protecting Oregonians from housing discrimination," said Commissioner Brad Avakian. "Our investigators take this responsibility seriously and we will ensure that appropriate action is taken when tenants are victims of housing discrimination."

The Civil Rights Division of the Bureau of Labor and Industries enforces laws granting job seekers and employees equal access to jobs, career schools, promotions, and a work environment free from discrimination or harassment. These laws ensure workers job protection when they report worksite safety violations, use family leave provisions or file for workers' compensation. Civil rights laws also provide protection for those seeking housing or using public facilities. The Division fields an average of 30,000 inquiries annually and investigates approximately 2,000-2,500 cases per year.

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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.