



Commissioner Brad Avakian  
Bureau of Labor and Industries

## COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE – January 26, 2010

Dear Friends:

With all of the important things going on in our state today, I want to stop and say thank you for taking the time to read my newsletter. I appreciate all of the positive feedback that folks have offered and I am very glad that you are finding this a useful effort on my part. If you have thoughts or ideas for making the Commissioner's Message better, please email them to [Commissioner.Brad.Avakian@state.or.us](mailto:Commissioner.Brad.Avakian@state.or.us). Or if there are folks who aren't receiving the Commissioner's Message but should, have them email [Bob.Estabrook@state.or.us](mailto:Bob.Estabrook@state.or.us) to get added to my list.

Like all of you, BOLI is keeping busy and looking forward to a number of events in the near future, including a legislative session in February. Although there are a number of employment-related concepts being considered by the legislature next month, I will be most closely watching legislators' efforts to balance the state budget before they return home at the end of February. I am relieved to see our economy recovering but at the same time recognize that many workers and employers are still struggling and will need to have access to the services that BOLI offers. With economic concerns still front and center, BOLI's budget is a critical investment in protecting Oregon workers and supporting Oregon businesses and I will defend it as forcefully as I can.

I am excited to participate in two upcoming events and want to thank the folks who have organized them. Esther Griffin and her colleagues on the [Beaverton Human Rights Advisory Commission](#) (HRAC) very kindly invited me to speak to them and members of the public that attend their February 2 meeting at Beaverton City Hall (1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room). This will be a great opportunity to talk about how BOLI is battling discrimination in Oregon and how we can work in concert with community leaders. This is particularly well-timed to follow the Oregon Council on Civil Rights' (OCCR) meeting this Thursday, where the Council will be outlining a priority list for the issues they'll be tackling first, and I will share an update from OCCR with HRAC on the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Thanks go also to my friends on the [Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs](#) (OCHA), who are hosting a town hall meeting in Gresham (also this Thursday) talking about labor and employment issues. This event is particularly targeted toward Hispanic and Latino Oregonians and education about their rights as workers in this state. I'm looking forward to this event at Tienda La Tapatia on SE Stark and appreciate the opportunity to share more information about BOLI and how we help workers.

The overriding message this week is: thank you. Thank you to the folks who are out there following our work, working on your own, and sometimes working directly with us, to improve the Oregon that we all love so much. I appreciate all of you for your help.

Sincerely,

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.*

## Avakian Announces PWR Survey Changes for 2010

Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) Commissioner Brad Avakian has announced revisions to the annual construction industry wage survey, which is used to determine prevailing wage rates for public works projects. Responding to concerns about the current system, Avakian brought together contractor and labor stakeholders last year and solicited recommendations from the Prevailing Wage Advisory Committee (PWAC) and the Oregon Employment Department, which administers the survey on BOLI's behalf.

"I want to thank the advisory committee for giving me thoughtful recommendations about improving the validity as well as the ease of use of our survey process," said Avakian. "I look forward to implementing these improvements to our process, and I am excited to continue discussing other potential improvements, such as data auditing and electronic reporting."

One recommendation that came unanimously from contractors and workers was to abolish the "peak week" survey methodology and allow collection of more statistically significant data. Beginning in 2010, the wage survey will collect data from four pre-determined weeks in order to gather more accurate data regarding wages paid.

"Continuing improvement to the survey and our rate-setting process is my goal," Avakian said. "There was widespread agreement on some changes and we're going to push forward with those, and I and the members of the advisory committee and representatives from the Employment Department will continue to discuss ways to increase the accuracy of our system as well as reducing the workload it creates."

You can find more information about the specific changes coming to the survey and rate-setting process [on BOLI's website](#). Surveyed contractors will be receiving information by mail about the specific changes, with additional information and assistance as the revised survey is implemented.

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## Avakian Statement on Oregon's Newest Unemployment Numbers

According to the Employment Department, unemployment stayed essentially unchanged at 11.0% in Oregon last month, despite a net gain of 2,900 jobs in seasonally adjusted nonfarm payroll. As Commissioner of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries and the state's Apprenticeship and Training Division, as well as a member of the Oregon Green Jobs Council, Brad Avakian plays a key role in the state's workforce development system. Commissioner Avakian made this statement:

**"Smart workforce investments are the key to Oregon's economic health. Oregon's slow economic recovery highlights the renewed effort we must make to train workers in the specific skills that employers are demanding. Investing in public education and job training programs will help create the workforce that existing employers and emerging industries are looking for in Oregon."**

## ***PWR SEMINAR SCHEDULE PUBLISHED***

The February-May schedule of prevailing wage law seminars has been finalized and is now available at <http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/docs/pwrsched.pdf>. In just the next four months, BOLI's PWR training coordinator will be conducting more than 20 seminars in seven counties, including sessions for both contractors and public agencies in Coos Bay, Roseburg and Redmond. Although you can watch the BOLI event calendar below for seminars as they approach, **many BOLI seminars fill up fast**. To ensure a seat in the seminar you need at the location you want, use the form at <http://egov.oregon.gov/BOLI/WHD/PWR/docs/pwrsched.pdf> to **sign up for PWR training now!**

### **Upcoming BOLI Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Jan. 28	OCCR Meeting	Portland State Office Bldg.	The Co-Chairs are developing the agenda	Kate Newhall @ 971-673-0786
Feb. 3 & 4	TA Seminar	Portland State Office Bldg.	<a href="#">Leave Laws in OR: a 2-Day Training</a>	TA Program @ 971-673-0825
Feb. 9	PWR Seminar	Portland State Office Bldg.	PWR for Contractors and Subcontractors	PWR Unit @ 971-673-0838
Feb. 9	PWR Seminar	Portland State Office Bldg.	PWR for Public Agencies	PWR Unit @ 971-673-0838
Feb. 17	TA Seminar	Eugene	<a href="#">Wage and Hour Laws</a>	TA Program @ 971-673-0825
Feb. 18	PWR Seminar	DHS' McKenzie Center in Eugene	PWR for Contractors and Subcontractors	PWR Unit @ 971-673-0838
Feb. 18	PWR Seminar	Portland State Office Bldg.	PWR for Public Agencies	PWR Unit @ 971-673-0838
Feb. 23	TA Seminar	Portland State Office Bldg.	<a href="#">Wage and Hour Laws</a>	TA Program @ 971-673-0825