

BUREAU OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES (BOLI)
COMMISSIONER BRAD AVAKIAN

Commissioner's Message – September 22, 2011
New optimism for public education this year

Dear Friends:

I've been a strident advocate for public education for a long time. I wanted to ensure that my kids have schools at least as good as the ones my wife and I grew up in, but more than that I want to preserve and improve upon the foundation of a fair and just society: an equal educational opportunity for all. Needless to say, when I read articles like [this](#), the direction that our schools are headed can get me down a little bit.

Fortunately for Oregonians, especially our school kids, the legislature took a firm step against the tide of No Child Left Behind accounting gimmicks this year by establishing a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) Revitalization Grant Fund and capitalizing it with new money—an investment of General Funds on top of the approved education budget. This was a huge victory for our students, for our school environment, and for our economy—and I am really excited about what it's going to mean for Oregon.

At its most fundamental level, an investment in CTE broadens choices for students, allowing them to explore new subjects or new applications for things they've already learned. Those options and opportunities have a broader impact than some people would expect, because they translate into a better all-around education, an appreciation for various kinds of jobs and the work that goes into them, an exposure to potential high-demand, living-wage career paths of which the student would otherwise not know. At the risk of sounding overly nostalgic, people felt differently about the value of work and workers when they knew how hard it is to build a decent bird house.

Our school environments will likewise benefit from broadening our educational focus. All our teachers should be encouraged to include practical applications and hands-on skills in their lessons, regardless of the subject they teach. By embracing a more complete view of what education *must* include, and showing that we value CTE as a component of a good public education, we can leverage what studies have been telling us for years: electives, especially music, art, P.E. and CTE, keep significant numbers of students engaged and interested in their education and reduce drop-outs while encouraging graduation. Teachers, regardless of subject, directly benefit from vibrant CTE options that help highlight their examples of the real-world use for particular skills and knowledge.

[I've frequently made the case](#) that investing in CTE is a direct investment in our economy, and the CTE program at Tillamook High School is a shining example of how it works. Just last week I was in Tillamook, visiting with the many partners who contribute to this fantastic program—including major local employers Stimson Lumber, Hampton Lumber and the Tillamook County Creamery Association—and celebrating the opening of a new Industrial Maintenance Technology Center. These employers, with a little help from BOLI and working directly with the Tillamook School District, Tillamook Bay Community College and others, have created a top-of-the-line environment for students to learn, hands-on, about the kind of machinery they'd be called upon to handle and maintain in local workplaces.

This is a win for the students, who learn tangible job skills for use in Tillamook or wherever they choose to settle, a win for the employers, who are ecstatic about the opportunity to avoid [the skill shortage that is thwarting growth in industries across America](#), and it's a win for Oregon, which has contributed a nominal amount of dollars and time to establishing an excellent pipeline for workers at valuable, locally-owned employers that pay living wages.

I cannot be anything but optimistic when I see the potential that Oregon is set to tap into, bringing together our employers and educators in ways that directly benefit our kids. We have the rare opportunity to take a proven model, build it out in a thoughtful way, and in doing that to light the way for Oregon's next economic boom. You can follow where all of this positive energy leads by staying tuned to this newsletter, and by joining the [CTE Grant Fund email list](#).

Sincerely,

Brad Avakian

The Brad Tracker

Brad has been busy lately. In addition to sending both kids off to college (one for the first time), he has:

- Attended the Guardians Reception and Awards Dinner at the Oregon Trial Lawyers' Annual Convention in Bend;
 - Participated in Tualatin's annual Crawfish Festival Parade, the Multnomah Days Parade and the Beaverton Celebration Parade;
 - Attended The Human Rights Campaign's 2nd Annual Portland Gala;
 - Spoken to the Executive Boards of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association;
 - Joined Amalgamated Transit Union's Local 757 for their annual picnic;
 - Spoken to the Columbia County Democratic Central Committee;
 - Addressed the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council 50th Annual Convention;
 - Spoken to the Saturday Breakfast Crew at Terwilliger Plaza retirement community;
 - Visited with working families at the Northwest Oregon Labor Council's Labor Day Picnic at Oaks Park;
 - Participated in Think Out Loud's [update on fair housing](#) issues on OPB;
 - Visited Tillamook High School and the partners who've made possible a new Industrial Maintenance Technology Center there—another victory for career and technical education in Oregon (as mentioned above);
 - Continued the work to implement Oregon's new Career and Technical Education Grant Fund (read [more below](#)), including meeting with State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo in Salem;
 - Announced Oregon's minimum wage for 2012 (see [article below](#)); and
 - Addressed the Mexican Consulate's Labor Rights Week about Oregon employment law.
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CTE Grant Committee to Begin Its Work

First awards from new grant fund to be made this spring

Commissioner Avakian and State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo have announced their appointees and co-chairs of the Career and Technical Education Revitalization Advisory Committee (CTERAC), the key voices who will help them administer the \$2 million dedicated to CTE restoration by the Oregon legislature [earlier this year](#). CTERAC holds its first public meeting, concentrating on organizational matters, on Thursday, September 29, 2011, from 9am to 3pm in Room 243 of the State Capitol.

The 12 members of CTERAC, appointed jointly by Avakian and Castillo, are drawn from the Oregon Legislature, organized labor, the business community and trade organizations, and education professionals from various backgrounds. They include:

Jon Chandler of the Oregon Homebuilders Association, CTERAC Co-Chair	Ginger Redlinger of Clackamas Academy of Industrial Sciences, CTERAC Co-Chair
Andrew Beyer of Lease Crutcher Lewis	Barbara Byrd of the Oregon AFL-CIO
Colin Cameron of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators	Rep. Kevin Cameron , Ore. House Republican Leader
	Mark Elston of Hampton Lumber
Penny Grotting of Malheur Education Service District	Brian Krieg of the Sheet Metal Contractors Association
John Mohlis of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council	Duella Scott-Hull , retired Coos Bay School District educator

“This is an exciting time for career and technical education in Oregon,” Avakian said. “We have work to do, thanks to years of disinvestment in CTE, but we have a concrete plan to get on the right track: maximizing the return on public dollars through partnerships with labor and industry, drawing on existing models of success and establishing a framework to bring high-quality CTE options that teach emerging or in-demand job skills to every student in Oregon.”

“The members of the CTE committee bring a tremendous breadth and depth of knowledge and experience to this project,” Castillo said. “I thank all of them for their past contributions to CTE in Oregon and look forward to the impact that they will have in building a strong foundation for future generations of Oregon students and workers.”

CTERAC, administered by the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industries, will award grants to successful applicants in spring 2012, with funds to be disbursed for the 2012-13 school year. Committee members will advise the Labor Commissioner and Superintendent on rules and policy regarding the grant application process and award criteria. Oregonians interested in following the committee’s work, which is open to the public, can join the secure “CTE Grants” email list at <http://listsmart.osl.state.or.us/mailman/listinfo/ctegrants>.

BOLI Announces 2012 Minimum Wage

New rate of \$8.80 per hour takes effect on January 1

Commissioner Avakian has announced that Oregon's minimum wage will rise to \$8.80 per hour next year. The 30-cent increase mirrors a 3.77% increase in the Consumer Price Index since August 2010. Oregon's minimum wage rate remains \$8.50 per hour for all hours worked in 2011. Washington, where the minimum wage is currently \$8.67 per hour, will announce its 2012 minimum wage on September 30th.

"Safeguarding the wages of low-income workers is especially critical in a tough economy," Avakian said. "Oregon's economy will not rebound if we allow 144,538 minimum wage earners to fall behind inflation."

Ballot Measure 25, enacted by Oregon voters in 2002, requires a minimum wage adjustment annually based on changes in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) is directed to adjust the minimum wage for inflation every September, rounded to the nearest five cents. (Read the statute detailing the adjustment, ORS 653.025, [here](#).)

"During my tenure, BOLI has fought to return nearly \$12 million to Oregonians unfairly denied their wages or faced with discrimination," Avakian continued. "Thousands of Oregon families are fighting to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads by working full-time at minimum wage jobs and this agency is committed to defending their wages."

Oregon is one of ten states, with Washington, Vermont, Ohio, Nevada, Montana, Missouri, Florida, Colorado, and Arizona, that annually adjusts the minimum wage based on inflation and the CPI. The CPI, published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, is a measure of the average change in prices over time for a fixed "market basket" of goods and services, such as food, shelter, medical care, transportation fares and other goods and services people purchase for day-to-day living.

"Oregonians recognize the rising cost of living facing every one of us, and our strong minimum wage law is essential insurance that Oregon workers and their families can maintain their purchasing power and continue to contribute to our local economies," said Avakian. "At the same time, although five out of six Oregon employers don't offer minimum wage jobs, I know that it's important to continue my dialogue with the businesses, many of them small operations, that do. Understanding their challenges will benefit our entire economy."

Revised minimum wage posters reflecting the new rate will be available for free download from BOLI's website in December. That site, which includes additional information about all of BOLI's activities, is <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI>.

For a printable PDF of the Commissioner's Message, [click here](#)

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