



Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

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BOLI Report Draws Path to Diverse Construction Workforce

Recommendations include policies, programs to support women, minorities

SALEM - Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) has delivered its biennial report *Diversifying the Construction Workforce* to the legislature. The new report identifies continuing barriers to employment in construction for women and people of color, exacerbated by the economic downturn, as well as model success stories and specific recommendations to increase construction workforce diversity.

"Many Oregonians are facing barriers to fulfilling, living-wage employment in the construction trades," said State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian, head of BOLI and Oregon's Apprenticeship and Training Division, which helped to compile the report. "The impact is not only on the workers whose opportunities are being limited, but on the Oregon communities that lose out on the contribution of potential role models for the next generation of workers."

The 2007 Oregon Legislature established a state goal of increasing diversity among workers employed on public improvement projects subject to state prevailing wage rate laws. As the state's top civil rights enforcement agency and the agency responsible for the administration of prevailing wage law, BOLI was charged with developing a plan and reporting regularly on recommended steps to increase diversity among workers on public improvement projects.

"To break this cycle of persistent underrepresentation for women and people of color in the construction workforce we have to think creatively," said Marcus Mundy, President and CEO of the Urban League of Portland. "Some efforts with promising results are already underway, but to build on those successes and achieve greater results, concrete steps have to be taken on each of the report's recommendations. Good policy must be accompanied by systematic, deliberate and consistent steps, with transparent timeframes, for achieving the aspirations set forth here. The Urban League is anxious to be part of those steps."

The new report offers a series of recommendations to more fully address the existing barriers to recruitment and retention of female and minority construction workers, including:

- Increase funding for pre-apprenticeship programs,
- Reinvest in education and hands-on training in middle and high schools,
- Implement workforce training and hiring goals statewide,
- Consider alternatives to low-bid procurement, and
- Appropriate adequate funding for comprehensive data collection, analysis and workforce research

The new report [*Diversifying the Construction Workforce*](#) is available on BOLI's website.

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