



September 8, 2008

Oregon should help employers follow the law

Labor agency seeks funds for seminars and hotline

Brad Avakian, the new commissioner of Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries, has a sensible idea: Help employers follow the law before they run afoul of it.

After all, state and federal labor laws cover myriad details, such as what questions prospective employers can ask, how workers must be paid and when it's legal to fire them.

Employers who break the law risk fines of \$1,000 or more. If workers go to court and win, the cost of misunderstanding labor law can be heavy indeed.

The state does offer Technical Assistance seminars to explain laws to employers. But the classes are spendy — about \$165 per employee for a daylong workshop. A business could spend thousands of dollars to send its managers to a seminar, say, on family leave laws. And that's just one of many topics on which employers must be up to date.

The state also runs a hotline to answer questions on employment law — (971) 673-0824. But its hours have been cut from full time to mornings. That's not much help if a workplace crisis erupts in the afternoon.

The Bureau of Labor and Industries plans to ask the Legislature for \$345,000 for Technical Assistance seminars and the employer hotline during the coming biennium, up from \$224,000 in 2007-09. The extra money would allow the bureau to reduce seminar fees and restore hotline hours.

Given tight budget times ahead, this addition will face tough vetting.

But a business-friendly state — as Oregon strives to be — should assume that employers want to follow the law and do its best to help them.

Online

For a link to Technical Assistance seminars offered by the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, see this editorial at StatesmanJournal.com.

Link

Technical Assistance Seminars offered by the Bureau of Labor and Industries:

http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI/TA/T_SEM_Taseminar.shtml
