



Commissioner Brad Avakian
Bureau of Labor & Industries

Press Release

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Avakian Joins Merkley in Promoting Energy Independence

Labor Commissioner calls clean energy workforce a natural fit for Oregon

COTTAGE GROVE- Oregon Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian today joined U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Oregon) in spotlighting the all-female engineering class of Cottage Grove High School students that have been assembling an all-electric vehicle and training the young women for high-skill jobs. Members of the class met with Avakian and Merkley at an electric vehicle charging station just off I-5 in Cottage Grove, where the Senator was stopping on his cross-state drive to emphasize energy independence for Independence Day.

“Energy independence and the clean energy economy require highly-skilled local workers to build and maintain our infrastructure,” Avakian said, describing his role in advocating for and winning a major expansion of the state’s investment in 21st century shop classes. “The experience that these talented young people have received is what we need to see in all Oregon middle and high schools, to really start developing the workforce that can build us out of our energy dependency. I hope the next career step for them will be one of the registered apprenticeship programs that I oversee as Labor Commissioner and that are right now training highly-skilled renewable energy workers for our state.”

Avakian’s leadership in 2011 brought [\\$2 million in new state support](#) to career and technical education options in public schools. He is expected to pursue an even larger investment of state resources in 2013, allowing the grant fund to support even more new and expanded programs in the next biennium.

"If we're going to have a middle-class in America, we need to make things in America," said Sen. Merkley. "To create these living wage jobs we need a new generation of people with the appropriate skills and training. It was great to see students at Cottage Grove High School getting hands-on engineering experience and even cooler that it was building an electric vehicle. I want to thank Brad for his leadership in opening up career options for Oregon youth."

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