



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Workforce diversity report shows progress, but gaps remain

“A well-trained, diverse workforce is central to Oregon’s economic growth,” says Avakian

PORTLAND—A new report from the Bureau of Labor and Industries on diversifying the construction workforce shows that minority participation rates in apprenticeship programs held steady despite a difficult economy, but still lagged behind registration and retention levels of white men.

“Oregon faces a skills gap as more and more baby boomers retire,” said Oregon Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian. **“Our state can create a healthier economy by investing in a stronger, more diverse workforce. While it’s encouraging to see women and minorities participate in construction apprenticeship programs at higher levels – especially during a difficult economy – there’s still a lot more work to be done.”**

The report, *Diversifying the Construction Workforce: Building for 21st Century Competiveness*, praised the legislature for its commitment to bringing back career and technical education and 21st Century shop classes to middle and high schools, an important investment to boost women and minority participation in Oregon’s construction trades.

Yesterday, the Oregon House of Representatives voted 59-0 to expand the Career Technical Education Revitalization Grant Fund with the \$7.5 million, a nearly four-fold investment over last year.

“The legislature’s investment in career and technical education will mean greater economic opportunity for more Oregonians,” said Commissioner Avakian. **“By nearly quadrupling its investment in modern shop classes, the legislature is helping more women and people of color get access to well-paying careers in Oregon’s construction sector. I appreciate the bipartisan coalition of rural and urban legislators who came together to address this urgent workforce need.”**

The report recommends that the state maximize its purchasing power to further diversify the construction workforce through workforce diversity requirements in the public works contracts and other initiatives.

Sen. Chip Shields (D-Portland) will hold hearings on the report’s finding during the interim. The legislature recently passed Senate Bill 831A, which directs the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to spend up to \$2.1 million of federal funds on construction workforce diversity and pre-apprenticeship training programs for women and members of minority groups. The bill also provides resources for supportive services that remove barriers to participation.

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About BOLI

The mission of the Bureau of Labor and Industries is to protect employment rights, advance employment opportunities, and provide for equal access to housing and public accommodations free from discrimination.