



Press Release

For Immediate Release

November 21, 2013

CONTACT: Charlie Burr, (971) 673-0788

Avakian urges federal LGBT workplace protections citing Oregon’s experience with Equality Act
Concerns about increased litigation and costs are unfounded, says Avakian

Portland, OR—Oregon Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian today urged U.S. House Speaker John Boehner to extend sexual orientation and gender identity workplace protections, saying that fears about increased litigation and costs to businesses are unsupported by our state’s six year experience with the Oregon Equality Act of 2007.

“Oregon’s experience since the law’s passage six years ago demonstrates that fears about employment discrimination complaints based on sexual orientation causing increased litigation and costs to business are unfounded,” said Commissioner Avakian. “In every year since Oregon’s equality law’s passage, employment complaints based on sexual orientation and gender identity have represented less than 2.5 percent of the total number of employment discrimination complaints received by our agency.”

As a state senator, Avakian supported passage of the bipartisan Oregon Equality Act of 2007, including carrying the legislation on the senate floor. As labor commissioner, Avakian enforces the law so that no Oregonian is denied a job or promotion because just because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

BOLI pursues each investigation not with an inherent bias for or against the complainant, but with a duty to find the truth and unique set of facts surrounding each complaint. The agency also provides assistance for Oregon employers so that they can avoid potential violations in the first place.

In a letter to the speaker’s office, Commissioner Avakian documented the small number of employment LGBT discrimination complaints received and investigated by the agency since 2007.

Total number of employment discrimination complaints filed with the Bureau of Labor and Industries between 2007 and 2012	FY 2012: 1,676
	FY 2011: 1,825
	FY 2010: 1,811
	FY 2009: 1,920
	FY 2008: 2,009
	FY 2007: 1,862

Total number of employment discrimination complaints filed with the Bureau of Labor and Industries between 2007 and 2012 where at least one of the claimed bases for discrimination is sexual orientation	FY 2012: 30 (1.7 percent) FY 2011: 35 (1.9 percent) FY 2010: 31 (1.7 percent) FY 2009: 46 (2.3 percent) FY 2008: 22 (1 percent) FY 2007: 32 (1.7 percent)
---	--

“Oregon’s protection is guided by a basic sense of fairness and understanding that everyone deserves the opportunity for professional success and advancement based on his or her own merit and hard work,” wrote Avakian. “I urge the U.S. House of Representatives to follow Oregon’s lead and pass this critical workplace protection.”

The letter is available upon request.

###