



Office of the Speaker
Oregon House of Representatives
Speaker Dave Hunt
Room 269, State Capitol, Salem, Oregon

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Speaker Hunt Statement on Civil Rights Enforcement Issues

Following the passage of HB 5054 from a Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee, House Speaker Dave Hunt issued the following statement on the bill's enhancements to Oregon's civil rights enforcement capacity:

“Protecting the civil rights of Oregonians is a crucial priority for state government. The Joint Ways and Means Committee highlighted that priority today with the passage of HB 5054. This legislation does two important things. First, it provides increased investigative and enforcement staff to the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) -- the primary civil rights enforcement agency in the state. Second, it allows for the creation of a civil rights unit within the Department of Justice to pursue violations outside BOLI's broad enforcement jurisdiction, such as free speech, other constitutional issues and criminal cases such as hate crimes.

“This legislation is consistent with the original proposal made by Commissioner Avakian early this session to provide additional civil rights enforcement at BOLI and in areas outside BOLI authority. It is imperative, especially during these difficult economic times, that state services be exercised with great efficiency and that we avoid duplication of services.

“This plan will provide increased civil rights protections and avoid any potential conflict the Attorney General may have in the enforcement of civil rights in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodations, given his primary duty as legal counsel to state agencies, who can sometimes be the employer in civil rights cases under BOLI investigation.

“HB 5054 enhances civil rights enforcement in Oregon by both bolstering BOLI's investigative capacity and allowing the Attorney General to play an appropriate role in civil rights enforcement that neither duplicates services, nor creates a potential conflict of interest for the Attorney General.”