

Avakian thanks unionists for campaign help

Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian paid a visit to the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council Executive Board meeting Nov. 27 to thank union officials for their help in his recent re-election campaign.

Avakian turned back a challenge from Republican state Sen. Bruce Starr, winning the nonpartisan race with 52.6 percent of the vote.

Rank-and-file union members played a big role in the outcome, leafletting jobsites prior to, and after work, for weeks before Election Day. A key talking point was Starr's support of a right-to-work law for Oregon, and his pledge to lower prevailing wages.

Avakian told union officials that he will push for more funding for high school shop classes in the 2013 legislative session. Avakian championed a bill in 2011 to fund new and expanded career and technical education (CTE) programs at high schools. The result of that legislation, he said, was 21 schools opened the school year with full shop classes.

Avakian said he will seek \$20 million in the next session. "This will get us three times as many shop classes if we get this," he said.

In response to a question about the



Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian on election night.

Columbia River Crossing, Avakian said he is a "huge advocate" for a new bridge and will do all that he can to make sure that it gets built.

Avakian reported that he is down to a short list of candidates to replace Legislative Director Kate Newhall, who resigned following the election to travel the world. Newhall has worked for Avakian since he was first appointed labor commissioner in 2008. Prior to that she worked on his 2006 campaign for state Senate.

Gone, too, will be Deputy Labor Commissioner Doug McKean, who is retiring at the end of the year. His successor is Christie Hammond, the administrator of BOLI's Wage and Hour Division. She started in her new post Dec. 1.

McKean has served more than 20

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