



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 9, 2017

To: [Joint Subcommittee on General Government](#)  
[Senator James Manning, Jr.](#), and [Representative Greg Smith](#), Co-Chairs

Re: [HB 2906](#) Establishes Oregon Geographic Information Council, etc. – **Support**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation. We support efficiency and transparency in government and citizen access to information. Additional League positions are appended.

As with all proposed legislation this session, we consider cost. Almost all government data has a geospatial component, a definable location. To review figures, from the 2005-2006 [Business Case for the Development of a Statewide GIS Utility](#), geospatial framework data related costs comprise 10% of our state budget, 5% of our agglomerated state and local government costs. In 2006-7, that ran to \$5.4 billion. We were stunned by the \$200 million annual expenditure for reconciling incompatible file formats and other fixes that could be largely averted by standardizing geospatial data file formats and coordinating geographic information system (GIS) information. Earlier testimony from the Polk County GIS Officer referred to his more than 25 years on this existing Council, to be codified in statute by this bill.

The League uses geospatial framework data for our Voter Services, both for elections and incumbent data. We research, compile and present candidate and ballot measure information. For the 2016 general election, we produced [VOTEResources](#) covering over 1,100 Oregon candidates and 350 ballot measures around Oregon. You can enter your address on our website, during election seasons, and see who will be on your ballot and what your ballot measures will be. With repeated outreach, we contacted County Clerks, Municipal Elections officials, and Special Districts, to find candidate filings. We invited candidates to list with us, including links for their websites, social media, photos, a statement, and for many races, we posed League juried questions related to the many local offices they were running for. We extracted data, sorted it, and posted it online. We produced Voters Guides at the state level in English and in Spanish, for state-wide candidates and researched ballot measures. Working with the State Library, Talking Books and Braille Services, we produced these in Large Print, Audio, and Braille versions. With their advice, we addressed all concerns for online reader compatibility posting on our website, which covered all Oregon elections.

Before the 2014 election, we were invited to meet with the OACC Executive Committee, who asked for our help and reported difficulty getting candidate filings from Special Districts. Effective geospatial data sharing and GIS coordination between districts could make this easier and would better serve the public. We suggested using customized County Election templates of elected offices, maintained and hyperlinked centrally at the state Elections Division.

After the 2014 election, we built a League [Oregon Who Represents You? public services website](#). We compiled an incumbent database linking over 7,100 Oregon public offices to their GIS districts, using volunteer labor. GIS information was inconsistent, reported in incompatible formats, and sometimes a mystery. Community College districts, for example, don't seem to be well defined. Defining shared regions continues to be complicated. Many Special Districts are run by elected volunteers and contact information is very poorly documented. We would like to discuss suggestions for incorporating outside reporting to update voting and incumbent information. It could then be confirmed to maintain validity.

Because we work to improve citizen participation in government, we believe it should be easy for Oregonians to reach our public officials and services. Linking services to people has a tremendous value. Our Leagues have printed "They Represent You!" pamphlets for a very long time. They include local contact information. Now the League has collected information for services administered diversely through our Counties, Cities, over 100 varieties of Special Districts, and through our many state agencies. Finding them was difficult, in part because the geospatial data and geographic information systems (GIS) that manage the data are not uniform. The process is not as efficient and effective as it should be. Sharing information and collaborating would better serve the public. We have been discussing possible improvements:

- Improve coordination between our multiple election officials, municipal, county, and state, for soliciting and reporting candidate filings and election results.
- Integrate GIS information processing for Oregon Counties and Special Districts with the state, to coordinate services and optimize integration between agencies.
- A comprehensive website of Oregon public service agencies searchable by user location, defined by GIS districts with contact information for all applicable Oregon offices, maintained with updated, current officials' contact information, as needed. Note, this is not the same as election results. This is laborious, but not hard to assemble.
- Ensure that as information changes, updates are applied, not accumulating as a backlog.

Disconnects between agencies and data gaps led us to this Data Sharing Work Group and now to support HB 2906. It took thousands of hours for us to compile the office information which, to a large degree, now only needs to be maintained and updated.

We believe a comprehensive Oregon public servants' website would be a valuable public service, also very useful within public agencies. Standardizing GIS districts, site maintenance responsibility and funding would need to be addressed. It could be more professionally produced by a state agency and this is already under discussion. Looking at our indices, then Elections Director Jim Williams was amazed to see that his home address is served by a Library District. Effective GIS coordination and geospatial data sharing between districts and through the geospatial data library, called for in HB 2906, will make maintenance of our Voter Services databases much easier.

Separate from Voter Service, the League has followed the update of ancient computer systems in our natural resources agencies. With each request, we have asked that the new system be compatible with other agencies, since much natural resource data is cross shared among agencies as they process permits or make other decisions. We have also encouraged local governments, as they update their systems, to also consider how those systems might interact or provide data sharing with these state agencies. This session we are engaged in assisting the Department of Environmental Quality as they take first steps towards updating their systems. The work to be done by this Council will provide a stronger voice to reach this goal. Fiscal impact for this bill could be offset by reducing the cost of the estimated \$200 million annually spent in reconciling GIS incompatibilities, and by efficiently sharing data between Oregon government agencies. Success of our state Resiliency Plan will depend on streamlined coordination. As Oregonians and League members, we support this effort and look forward to supporting government efficiency improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President



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## LWVUS and LWVOR

### Positions applicable to Citizen Participation and Access, to information and transparency in government.

- The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, and *coordination among the different agencies and levels of government*.  
--*League Principles, LWVOR Issues for Action 2014-2015*
- Citizen participation and access are also important parts of LWVOR positions on Land Use and the Judicial System, and LWVUS positions on Campaign Finance, Citizens Right to Know/ Citizen Participation, Environmental Protection and Pollution Control, Natural Resources Public Participation, United Nations, and International Relations Trade Policy. Regulating agencies that govern the protection and conservation of water should be transparent and *provide the public easy access to information*.  
--*LWVOR Issues for Action Water Policy 2011*

### LWVUS and LWVOR Positions applicable to Public Records Law, citizen access to information and transparency in government.

- "We must promote an **open governmental system** that is representative, accountable and responsive." *LWVUS Representative Government position*
- Citizen participation and access are also important parts of LWVOR positions on Land Use and the Judicial System, and LWVUS positions on Campaign Finance, Citizens Right to Know/ Citizen Participation, Environmental Protection and Pollution Control, Natural Resources Public Participation, United Nations, and International Relations Trade Policy. Because of these scattered positions, we collect here our combined history of advocacy for Citizen Participation and Access. – *Issues for Action, Governance, Citizen Participation & Access*
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