



**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.

March 14, 2017

To: House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
Representatives Andy Olson and Tawna Sanchez, Vice Chairs
Members of the Committee

Email: hhs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: HB 2937, Permits “Accessory Dwellings” on Rural Residential and EFU Lands – **OPPOSE**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon first studied land use in 1959 and has been active since in supporting our statewide land use planning program with local implementation. Agriculture, as the 2nd largest industry in Oregon and the most stable, we believe in preserving lands that feed the world.

LWVUS has an extensive set of housing positions, starting with supporting programs and policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family. We participated in amendments to Metro’s Regional Framework Plan in the 1990s to assure an increase in housing for our largest population centers. Most recently we worked to add “Table 5” (attached) to the new simplified urban growth boundary process, so that housing can be provided where needed infrastructure, transportation and services are more likely to exist in both large and small urban centers. In fact, as part of this last year’s work on the 50-acre pilot project (HB 4079 2016), this same Table is included before cities can consider applying for one of the pilots. Local leagues and their members have continued to work on mechanisms to encourage and incentivize affordable housing, most recently in supporting the Construction Excise Tax. Members are also having discussions with local citizens on absorbing systems development charge costs for affordable housing projects among other concepts.

What we do believe is that affordable housing needs to be located in large and small urban areas, where services already exist in order to reduce costs of development. HB 2937 doesn’t do that.

The bill does not require that the “accessory dwelling unit” be affordable, but instead allows for a second standalone unit. In rural residential and exclusive farm use areas, drinking water is usually provided by a well. We know that some wells are insufficient for the needs of the current resident; some may not meet health standards (wells are not checked once installed) and in some areas groundwater depletion is a very real issue. The state’s Water Resources Department is unable to provide data to help counties as they consider rural housing applications. Additionally, these houses are on septic systems—again that are not usually checked once installed and may not meet current standards.

As an aside, the League has worked with others related to well testing and has supported a loan system to help low income persons to upgrade failing septic systems. We are working on these issues for current residents. Rural residents deserve safe drinking water and waste disposal that does not jeopardize their health.

Besides the basic infrastructure, if these units were really for low income persons, they would most likely need public transportation. Any employment might well be miles away from these units.

We appreciate the Committee's search for solutions to our affordable housing crisis. And we stand ready to help where we can. But we believe this bill does more harm than good for Oregonians. We ask that you reject HB 2937 and allow us to work with you to find real solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



Peggy Lynch
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator

Attachment: **Table 5:** OAR 660-038-0190(5) Table of measures to accommodate housing needs within the UGB: http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/rulemaking/UGB_RAC/OAR660-038.pdf