



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OREGON

# Legislative Report

March 11, 2015

Volume 25, Number 4

## 2015 Legislative Session

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## Natural Resources

### Climate Change

**[SB 324A](#), the Clean Fuels bill, is now on its way to Governor**

**Brown.** She has indicated support, so we assume it will be signed this week. This bill is a small step in addressing GHG, enabling a 10% reduction in CO2 over 10 years. The program will guarantee 7 million metric tons of carbon pollution stay out of our air, equivalent to 37,500 rail cars of coal.



*Peggy Lynch, Natural  
Resources  
Coordinator*

On Feb. 25th, two **carbon pricing bills** were introduced: **[HB 3176](#)** (tax proposal) and **[HB 3250](#)** (cap and dividend program). Both have been assigned to House Energy & Environment. No hearings have been scheduled yet. Oregon Climate is taking the lead on these bills. ([Click here](#) read their statements.)

**[SB 262](#), increase in oil vessel fees** supported by the League, had a work session in Senate Environment and Natural Resources which recommended a Do Pass and referred to Senate Finance and Revenue. **[SB 271](#), increase in rail oil fees**, has yet to be scheduled for a hearing in the same Committee. **[HB 3225](#)**, a new comprehensive bill related to **oil transport safety**, has been introduced by Rep. Barbara Smith Warner and assigned to the House Committee on Energy & Environment.

The **Board of Forestry** met on March 4th and received a presentation of a **draft Climate Change Adaptation Policy**. ([Click here to see a "Pre-meeting" materials pdf: scroll to 7. Climate Change Addaption Recommendation](#)). It is unclear that this plan reflects best practices and whether it

## Oregon's Secretary of State

Read Oregonian article

### ["Kate Brown appoints Veteran Government Aide Jeanne Atkins"](#)

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addresses the state-adopted Integrated Water Resources Strategy-important since **most of our drinking water begins in our forests**. Contact Andrew Yost or Kevin Birch of the Dept. of Forestry to learn more.

### Natural Hazards, Toxic Free Kids Act and more

[SB 94](#), Natural Hazards/Tsunamis, was pulled from the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness agenda before a hearing was held. The League had provided testimony on the bill, as we did on HB 2633 ([testimony](#)). We expect HB 2633 to be amended and move forward on this issue. [SB 5543](#), a 2013-15 budget rebalance bill, included \$670,000 to the Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries to purchase 15 seismometers, helping to monitor earthquake action throughout Oregon.

No one from the Action Team could attend the hearing on [SB 478](#), the **Toxic Free Kids Act**, requiring the Oregon Health Authority to maintain a list of 66 "high priority chemicals" that they use in children's products and eventually require manufacturers to remove or use substitutes for certain chemicals. **Kristen Sweeney, a League volunteer, listened to the hearing and sent notes so that we can consider our next steps related to this bill. Your help is always welcome!**

We testified on [SB 5528](#), the Oregon Parks and Recreation budget. ([Read the comments here.](#)) Due to a reduction in lottery revenue, fee collection and federal funds, the proposed budget is below "current service level". The League expressed concern about the conversation around divestment of some parks properties and exactly what other revenue raising ideas were being considered. We encouraged continuing work on the state scenic rivers program. The League encourages you to **engage with the Parks Commission** as they have these important discussions.

Monday, March 9, we provided testimony supporting [SB 266](#) with the -2 amendments, authorizing grants to assist in **place-based planning**, as part of our support for the **Integrated Water Resources Strategy**. ([Read Monday's testimony here.](#))

[HB 2497](#), requiring natural resource agencies to provide special notice to Legislators on rulemaking, had a House hearing this week in the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. The League opposed **the bill as unnecessary and**

## Forest Pesticide Reform Advocacy Day March 12

[Click here to find out more.](#)

### From LWVUS: UPDATE

#### Meeting Basic Human Needs Position

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**costly for agencies to implement.** ([Read the testimony.](#)) Dept. of Justice pointed out that the bill required 49 days notice which would be problematic when temporary rules are needed. Every agency now maintains a notice list for anyone wanting information on agency rulemaking. **Legislators can join the rest of us and sign up!**

We are all concerned about the **summer fire season.** The last two fire seasons we had to access the \$25 million fire insurance policy and still had to pay significant monies from our General Fund to cover fire-fighting costs. Last year's policy premium was \$2 million. We have just learned that **the new premium will be \$19 million.** Legislators will have to quickly decide if this is a good decision or if we gamble without the policy since the possible payout would only be \$6 million more than **the premium and the policy year begins April 1st.**

**Our Watch List:** [SB 204](#), [SB 534](#), [HB 2034](#), [HB 2267](#), [HB 2277](#), [HB 2295](#), [HB 2436](#), [HB 2443](#), [HB 2633](#), [HB 2666](#), [HB 2724](#), [HB 2881](#). For information about these bills, please read them at the Oregon Legislature website or contact Peggy Lynch: [zuludar@aol.com](mailto:zuludar@aol.com).

**Climate Watch List:** [SB 20](#), [SB 22](#), [SB 23](#), Coal to Clean: [HB 2729](#) or [SB 477](#). Carbon Tax: [HB 2082](#). For information about these bills, please read them at the Oregon Legislature website or contact Claudia Keith: [ca.keith@comcast.net](mailto:ca.keith@comcast.net)

**Forestry Watch List:** [SB 257](#) and [SB 613](#). For information about these bills, please read them at the [Oregon Legislature website](#) or contact Jen Haynes: [Jennifer.A.Haynes@comcast.net](mailto:Jennifer.A.Haynes@comcast.net)

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## Social Policy

### **Ways and Means Committee:**

The 2013-15 Budget Rebalance, [SB 5543](#) was passed Friday. The Department of Corrections received \$30 million more for the remainder of the biennium. The population is not decreasing as expected. Another \$3.5 million went to the Public Defense Services Commission. The Department of Forestry received \$4.8 million for



*Karen Nibler, Social Policy Coordinator*



**Abigail Scott Duniway**

**The Statutory Hall Commission recommends Abigail Scott Duniway. [Read the Oregonian AP article.](#)**

**Oregon League of Conservation Voters Lobby Day March 24**

[Click here to find out more.](#)



**[LWVOR UPDATES HEALTH CARE PAYER STATEMENT](#)**  
**[\(click here\)](#)**

**Meet the newly inaugurated Governor Kate Brown**



[Click here for video link](#)

emergency fire costs. The Oregon Liquor Control Commission received \$1 million in other funds for M 91 implementation and liquor agents' compensation. A few other departments did not spend money on projects, which helped on the rebalance. Two of the largest Human Services Departments were not included in this rebalance.

**Department of Human Services Budget, [HB 5026](#)**, was on the agenda March 3 in the Human Services Subcommittee. DHS has a huge budget, estimated at \$9.8 billion this biennium, with many programs. Our letter hits the high level changes and stability in this budget. ([Link to letter](#)) The focus was on the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and the other programs that intersect in the cluster of services that help these families. This is the first budget presentation and will be followed up with a more specific examination in April or May.

The Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) [SB 5514](#) Budget was heard on March 5 in the Public Safety Subcommittee. OJD received support from the Law Commission, Legal Aide, County Commissioners, District Judges, District Attorneys, Defense Attorneys, Oregon Civil Attorneys and businesses who depend upon access to the courts. LWVOR testified last so we got in the last word. ([Link to letter](#).) The courts have a pivotal role in the whole Public Safety System and should have adequate resources to operate in each judicial district. No dollar amounts were recommended at this stage.

**The House Health Care Committee** heard two bills we would support on Friday. [HB 2600](#) proposed that businesses maintain insurance coverage for employees while on family leave. Federal law contains this provision and this bill would align Oregon law. Oregon allows for up to 36 weeks on family leave, so the continuation of insurance coverage would be expensive for employers, and the employees would still be required to contribute their share while not receiving a paycheck. This bill will continue to be worked and will come up again for another Public Hearing before it is passed out of committee.

**The Basic Health Plan, [HB 2934](#)**, proposes to cover additional adults and families within **138 to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level**. The state would ask the Federal Center for Medicaid Services for a waiver to cover these people under the Medicaid program. The 2014 HB 4109 directed OHA to commission an independent study of the costs and impacts of operating a federal Basic Health Plan (BHP) in Oregon. **BHP is part of the ACA**. The 114

**Legislative budget writers want the revenue committees to squeeze \$64 million worth of expiring Oregon tax credits in \$14 million made available on their budget framework for the next two years.**

**[Click here to read Portland Tribune Article.](#)**

page study looked at four areas: eligible BHP population in Oregon; consumer affordability and continuity of coverage; impact to Oregon's Marketplace; potential federal funding for BHP; and State implementation. **The study is included as testimony in the public hearing.** Oregon Law Center, Oregon Center for Public Policy, Oregon Health Equity Alliance, Health Care for All Oregon, Asian Pacific Islanders Health Forum testified in favor of this option, and an insurance representative opposed the public plan, which would take people out of the local insurance market. This bill will continue to be worked too. *-Reported by Jean Gallaher*

**Education Budget:** The Joint Committee on Ways and Means Sub Committee on Education is hearing the Education budget this week and next: [HB 5016](#) Oregon Department of Education and HB 5017 State School Fund. A visual recap [HB 5016 ODE Presentation](#) provides an overview which can be found on OLIS March 3 ommittee meeting materials.

The Co-Chairs' Framework sets the combined General Fund/Lottery Funds funding level for the State School Fund is \$7.235 billion that flows to School Districts for K-12, a \$585 million or an 8.8% increase over the 2013-15 funding level. This amount assumes a \$220 million cost for implementing state payment for full-day Kindergarten and a \$34 million increase (\$36 million currently in the CSL) in the amount available for the High Cost Disability grants to assist school districts that are experiencing higher special education costs.

The Sub Committee anticipates that the \$7.24 State School Fund HB 5017 may be approved and passed earlier. Other parts of the budget in [HB 5016](#) the Oregon Department of Education may wait until later in the session for consideration. *- Reported by Chris Vogel*

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## Governance

### Partisan Frustration

Oregonian's political actions do not mirror those of other states. The prime example is the 2014 General Election when voters kept the Democratic (Ds) Governor and

increased that party's legislative majority. The party in the minority is thwarted and frustrated because it is almost powerless to amend measures or to have its agenda considered. Further, the majority can not only get its bills passed, but for the most part they are veto free.



*Kappy Eaton,  
Governance  
Coordinator*

But Oregon politics also changes the party makeup of the Legislature every so often, without changing the statewide elected leadership. The Republican (Rs) party gained control of the Legislature in 1991 and kept its majority until 2005 when Ds took over the Senate. The House changed parties in 2007. During that 15 year period, Democrats held the offices of Governor, State Treasurer, Attorney General and Secretary of State. However, it was not possible to pass any Ds bills or even to have hearings in the House. Several long-time Ds did not seek re-election because of frustration. Now the tables have turned, and the Rs are frustrated because minority reports are not being considered and some members are not seeking re-election. That's the way it is, no matter who is in charge.

One thing has changed. When the Ds took over in 2007, it became mandatory for committees to hold a hearing on any measure that has passed one chamber. Also, during the past three legislative periods, both the House and Senate have experienced having equal party membership for one session, and the parties managed to work together.

### **Motor Voter Passes**

[HB 2177](#), which authorizes the DMV to forward the record of all new and renewed driver licensed individuals to the Secretary of State, **has passed both chambers** on party line votes. This measure was the priority issue for the then Secretary of State, and the new Governor is expected to sign it. It is expected to add **300,000 new voters** to the rolls. The individuals will be notified of their voter registration and will have 21 days to return the post-paid card to opt out or to indicate a party preference or non-affiliation.

### **Pay Equity Moving**

[HB 2007](#), which will protect workers by prohibiting employer retaliation for discussing wages amongst themselves, passed the House with a party line vote, 34-24. Women make 79 cents to every dollar made by men, according to the **2014 report of the Oregon Council on Civil Rights**. Wage

transparency is considered a proven strategy in closing the pay gap between men and women. A second bill, [HB 2006](#), which makes it an unlawful employment practice to pay employees of the opposite sex with equivalent jobs at different wage rates, is awaiting a hearing. [SB 491](#) combines equal pay and retaliation issues.

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