



**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.

February 22, 2017

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Senator Lew Frederick and Representative Brad Witt, Co-Chairs
Members of the Committee
Email to: jwmnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: SB 5502 – Department of Agriculture Budget - **Comments**

The League has strong positions related to protecting agricultural lands, to assuring abundant clean water for all, assuring our public facilities are not damaged by invasive species (which would cost us all millions) and that government has the responsibility for public safety.

Former Director Coba reminded a 2015 legislative committee that we won't have enough agriculture land worldwide to feed the expected 9 billion world population by 2050. The League works to preserve Oregon's valuable farmland—not only in the Willamette Valley, but all over Oregon. The agriculture land in Eastern Oregon is as important to Oregon agriculture as is the Willamette Valley, Southern Oregon and the rest of Oregon. Oregonians can proudly point to the fact we “saved” lands that now supply the world with exceptional quality wines, for instance.

Industrial agriculture is about 14% of Oregon's economy. It is the most stable of our industries with diversified crops and products that have weathered economic ups and downs.

The Dept. of Agriculture is one of four agencies that participated in the original Integrated Water Resources Strategy and is part of the current update. Water is critical to Oregon agriculture, but that water needs not only to be abundant but of high quality. The League uses the Key Performance Measures provided by the Legislature to consider policies, regulations/enforcement and funding considerations when commenting on budgets. We note that KPM #12 related to Water Quality continues to underperform. There are two issues we see: the program is voluntary and financial support for the program is less than needed. We note that Policy Packages 310 and 330 were not included in the Governor's budget. And the Agricultural Water Quality Program, funded by lottery dollars, is on the cuts list. A KPM cannot be met unless support is provided.

We were also dismayed that Package 340, Invasive Species Council Funding, was not included in the Governor's budget. Curbing invasive species is a very real economic issue for both private business and public entities.

We support the work of the Department related to food safety. Just like other state public safety programs, this work is critical to Oregonians' health and wellbeing.

We were invited to participate in the Department's Strategic Planning process and look forward to the completion of that effort in order to assure the agency's mission continues to be fulfilled.

League members enjoy the bounty provided by the wide variety of Oregon's commodities. We encourage the Legislature to support the work of this agency and consider our comments as you develop the final budgets for our natural resource agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



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Cc: Department of Agriculture Director Alexis Taylor (ataylor@oda.state.or.us)
Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Director (Jason.Miner@oregon.gov)