



**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 28, 2017

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

Re: SB 5527 – Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) budget - COMMENTS

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. We believe that Goal 1 requires open access to the land use process and that all citizens have a stake in the development of their communities.

The League believes this department is critical to the health and wellbeing of Oregonians. **As we plan our cities and counties, we are deciding where we will all live, work, shop, play and how we'll get there.** Planning determines what kind of infrastructure communities will need. It helps assure our natural areas are protected and we have not only economically vital agricultural and forest lands, but lands for other industrial uses. (Slide 4 of the DLCD slide presentation is a wonderful visual of the important part this agency plays in our daily lives.)

You have heard of the importance of local government grant monies because it is those grants that help pay for public engagement in local planning efforts. But, as we see turnover in staff at the local level, agency staff is as critical, if not more so. We have always supported funding local planning efforts by local communities, but, **if the choice is between General Funds for grants or field staff, we pick staff.** The exception to that statement is the value of funding Portland State University's Population Forecasting. This work provides all Oregon cities and counties with timely population numbers that will allow them to more rapidly respond to population changes. Those numbers not only relate to land needs, but planning for a variety of infrastructure needs—projects that are expected to have a 30-50 year useful life.

Among the projects DLCD staff has done in the past is provision of local model codes that many local governments can use to update their local development codes. In these General Fund strapped times, we need to stretch those dollars to get the most help to the most local communities, especially small communities. If this body can find additional revenue for state services, we would gladly advocate for more local government grants.

We believe that DLCD needs enough money in its budget to “hire” Attorney General (AG) services when violations of the system rise to the level of state concern. Like other natural resource agency regulations, this agency's rules are enforced by complaint and AG services are vital to program compliance. You heard yesterday that staff will only review a portion of the Plan Amendments submitted to them this next biennium.

We support the position in POP 105 to help with coastal resilience mitigation planning. Agency staff to help multiple jurisdictions with broad planning issues is, as stated above, critical to the program's

success. You will hear us also support the Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) work related to hazards. Again, as we look to savings and efficiencies, we wonder if housing the DOGAMI's science division ought not to be a part of DLCD's GIS division.

Should there be additional funds in the future, we believe it is time to update the Climate Change Adaptation Framework. We are learning more and more about the multiple effects of sudden and extreme weather events, from the major drought of 2015, huge rangeland fires, beach erosion and flooding. This report was a multi-agency look at those issues with suggested responses. It's time for another such conversation.

We also want to share our disappointment that the Governor's budget did not include a shared staffer between DLCD and the Housing and Community Services Department. Providing housing for everyone—especially for our low income populations, including low income workforce housing—is a top level conversation in the building this year. But the answers differ around the state. Having a staffer with an eye on both the land use planning and the “making it happen” side would be very helpful for all Oregon communities. Again, often a staffer can provide help for multiple communities, thereby stretching our limited state dollars.

There has been some discussion about the role of the Regional Solutions Teams during this presentation. The League continues to follow this program. Our focus has been on assuring that Oregon citizens know about the program, the Regional Solutions Advisory Committee (RAC) membership and meetings and assuring a provision for public comment as these Committees set “regional priorities” and expend state money and staff time on “regional projects”. We support Regional Solutions Teams so long as their work is open and citizen/local government driven. We have even supported additional staff in natural resource agencies to accommodate the collaborative work being done by these Teams.

As you look for savings, we recommend the Full Ways and Means take a second look at the Regional Solutions Advisory Committees. We are very concerned that RACs are doing priority-setting without a full community/regionwide discussion. And state monies and staff are expended without full legislative oversight. We note that the Co-Chairs have suggested a reduction in staffing in the Office of the Governor for these RACs. (We recognize that these positions aren't in this budget, but connecting programs among the silos of state government is a goal we hope others share.) We believe that local governments already meet together for other purposes—that the information needed by the Regional Solutions Teams is already available. As we have testified in other budgets, agencies finding ways to work together is efficient, a cost-saving and provides the best outcome. The Teams—yes. The RACs—maybe not so much.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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DLCD Presentation; Slide #4