



**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 23, 2017

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

Re: SB 5537, Budget for the Department of State Lands - Comments

The Department of State Lands is critical to the management of many of Oregon's public assets: Not only the for Common School Fund lands and the management of the actual Fund, but for the protection of the waters of the state.

The League has strong positions on water quality. We particularly note that Oregon has a goal of no net loss of wetlands. Oregon recognizes the role of wetlands in water quality and in flood management among other values. The waters of the state are an important public asset. Management of activities in these waters must be done carefully and with full application of state regulations and in recognition of the myriad of federal regulations that also govern these waters.

We have watched the reorganization of the Department and believe that the opportunities for linking decision making is a positive for both the general public and for those applying for permits. To that end, the League has supported increased oversight of suction dredge mining. We helped in the development of the Territorial Sea Plan and believe the department has an important role in managing activities within our territorial waters.

We also support the continuation of the Historical Filled Lands Project (POP 102). Much work has been done among the various private parties, as well as the department. When a contentious issue has found a possible solution, we should grab it—or, in this case, fund it!

We support the limited dollars in POP 104 to assist in removing derelict vessels on state-owned waterways. These vessels can spew oils and otherwise contaminate Oregon's waters. If we cannot find an owner, we must protect our waters.

The Portland Harbor Cleanup effort must continue. The Portland League in particular has been an active commenter during the decision-making process. We are pleased that we are moving from discussions on how to clean up this important public place to actually beginning the cleanup! We look forward to when the harbor can offer the opportunity for both recreational and economic uses. We support the state's diligence in protecting the state's liability and we support the department's request (POP 101) for continuing this important work. We do think that the \$10 million bonding now in the DEQ budget belongs in DSL's budget instead.

The League has been a longtime supporter of the South Slough Reserve, an incredible special place for research, for educational opportunities and for recreation. We support the ongoing efforts to maintain this asset and encourage the department to seek further federal funding to expand the reserve as willing sellers

appear. We are concerned about the possible management change to one of our state universities, mostly because we know DSL's management has been positive for the health and the growth of this asset.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources such as forests and the animals and plants living within them should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

The League has watched the State Land Board struggle with balancing the requirement to provide monies to the Common School Fund, while managing a variety of state lands. The Elliott Forest, of course, is the most well-known. On December 9, 2014, the League provided testimony to the Department related to the Elliott State Forest, in part: "*LWVOR acknowledges that this is a very difficult issue because of an outdated arrangement that couples a pristine forest ecosystem to school funding. Our schools and protection of our forests are both important and one should not have to be chosen at the expense of the other.*" We participated in meetings as the Protocol was explained. We believe that comments we made improved the document, BUT we have continued to **encourage the State Land Board to keep this incredible asset in public hands.** We are supporting Governor Brown's efforts to find a public ownership solution. To that end, we support SB 847, the Trust Land Transfer bill. It is a tool that might help protect the Elliott's remaining native forests, including the old growth forests that are disappearing from our landscape, can protect the wild salmon and imperiled wildlife, safeguards the Elliott for public recreational and educational opportunities **and can promote timber jobs by restoratively thinning the second-growth tree farms.** We believe that the Elliott, like other forest lands and massive acres of rangeland, provides diversity in the Common School Fund's portfolio. The stock market has been a friendly vehicle these past few years, but that has not always been the case. In the early 2000s and again in 2009 the fund experienced a loss—each loss much greater than the 3 years of timber proceeds lost on the Elliott.

We note that the relatively newly acquired lands in Central Oregon should allow for increased revenue to the Fund. We understand that some of that acreage has been included in Bend's newly adopted Urban Growth Boundary. Decisions on whether to sell or enter into development contracts will need to be made. The adopted Master Plan should guide the department.

As you can see, this department has a wide variety of responsibilities. Administrative leadership and staff support for their multiple missions has been impressive. POP 106 is yet more evidence of that leadership. The League has pressed for shared services among these relatively small agencies and we strongly support this request.

Lastly, we will stay silent on the other department requests. We are sure this Committee will consider their value in approving the final budget. We do want to recognize the value of this agency to Oregon—to its children and to our natural assets. Your consideration of the various requests in this budget is appreciated.



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