



**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 29, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair

Re: **SB 644** – Changes to laws relating to mining and mineral resources – **OPPOSE**

The League of Women Voters supports policies that promote both conservation and development of land as a natural resource, in accordance with Oregon's land use goals. These policies are designed to achieve a balance between competing resources by establishing a careful land use review process, involving participation by citizens and local government. We strongly oppose SB 644, because it makes fundamental changes to these processes, tipping the scale to favor mining over other land uses.

First, the League opposes changes made to SECTIONS 1 and 2 of ORS 516.080, dealing with the administrative structure of the State Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI). SB 644 would mandate very specific selection criteria for the five-citizen Governing Board, in effect tying the hands of the Governor to choose the most qualified individuals to set policy, oversee general operations, and develop a strategic plan to help guide DOGAMI's mission and objectives. Two of the members would directly represent the mining industry, which in our opinion does not fit with **DOGAMI's mission of oversight and providing "earth science information and regulation to make Oregon safe and prosperous."** DOGAMI staff has been providing valuable information to help Oregonians recognize our natural hazards and will be working with coastal communities to plan for the eventual "Big One". Board members need to have a broad statewide view of this agency's mission.

Secondly, the League opposes provisions in SB 644 related to mining in Eastern Oregon. The bill allows mining, crushing, or stockpiling of aggregate or other minerals to be included in the list of accepted uses in any area zoned for exclusive farm use in Baker, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Union, and Wallowa Counties. This would exempt mining in these counties from the land use review and permitting requirements that all other counties must follow. It would bypass the involvement of local government and citizens, an essential component of the process.

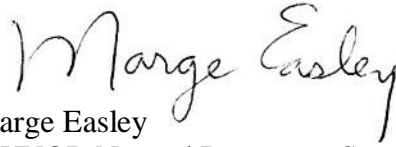
We believe that farming and mining are equally important for the prosperity of our state. In fact, cattle is the top agriculture "product" and much of that "product" grazes on Eastern Oregon farmland. We object to attempts such as SB 644 that significantly change our land use system by carving out land use exemptions to favor one industry over another.

Lastly, we oppose Sections 17 and 18 related to motorized in-stream placer mining. We are supportive of the compromises contained in the -8 amendments of SB 3 and hope to see the Legislature honor the memory of Sen. Alan Bates with passage of that bill.

For all the reasons above, we urge you to vote “no” on SB 644.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



Marge Easley
LWVOR Natural Resources Specialist

cc: Brad Avy, State Geologist (Brad.Avy@dogami.state.or.us)
Lauri Aunan, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Advisor (Lauri.Aunan@oregon.gov)