August 9, 2016

To: Angus Duncan, Chair
Oregon Global Warming Commission
Oregon.GWC@state.or.us

Subject: Oregon Greenhouse Gas Emission Targets and Climate Change Planning

The League of Women Voters of Oregon recognizes that the greatest environmental/moral challenge facing us at this time is climate disruption. There is an urgency, according to current science, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions fast enough to avoid serious damage to the global climate ecosystem.

We ask the Oregon Global Warming Commission (OGWC) to recommend immediately, by spring 2017, a change to Oregon's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission targets to reflect current best science. All government policies regarding greenhouse gas/CO2 pollution and de/forestation should be aimed at 350 ppm by 2100. Under OGWC’s leadership and with the work of other government agencies, non-governmental, and private sectors we need to mobilize to reframe Oregon’s resource stewardship to:

1) Specifically address how best to update and implement our State of Oregon Climate Change Plans (and related planning processes), provide appropriate funding for this and
2) Manage all our resources and related state policies with Climate Change awareness,
   ▪ focusing on the constitutional Public Trust Doctrine (trustee fiduciary requirements to the next generations),
   ▪ and applying a disciplined science-based climate recovery planning approach as the foundational framework.

The League’s Climate position calls for the following recommendations to State of Oregon leadership:

1) As a first step, Oregon’s Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets must be updated to reflect current science. This includes how emission measurements are recorded/defined with special attention to the Agricultural and Forestry sectors. Annual GHG emission target reductions starting in 2016 need to be 7%- 8%. These percentages go up each year if goals are not accomplished. (Link to U of O Law Professor Mary C. Wood keynote transcript)
2) Oregon’s Climate Plan must be updated to ensure we do our part to move C02 ppm back to below 350 by 2100 and manage net GHG emissions so warming is maintained below a 1.5C increase and returns to 1.0C increase by 2100.
3) Oregon’s Climate Plans at every level of government (city, county and state) need to address both adaptation and mitigation, including prioritizing an economic and science-based price on greenhouse gas emissions.
4) Oregon’s Climate Plan must reflect a social policy to assure a just transition which addresses the needs of all communities, especially those challenged with equity issues.

From recent Our Children’s Trust (OCT) press releases, the legal position and current science is clear:
“…Explaining what the youth are asking for in the suit, Julia Olson, lead counsel for the plaintiffs and Executive Director of Our Children’s Trust, explains that they seek “a meaningful remedy in the form of a science-based climate recovery plan. Because they recognize that it is the government’s responsibility to create and implement a plan, they are not asking for a specific plan. “But the government’s plan must be based on science. And it must work,” she continued. “Because a plan that does not work—or worse, and like we have now, no climate recovery plan at all—will mean a future for these youth that is simply unfathomable…”

“….Emission reductions of only 1.7 percent per year (Washington state) are not much different than business as usual,” said Dr. James Hansen, director of the Climate Science, Awareness and Solutions program at Columbia University. “They would leave young people with an intolerable burden to somehow suck enormous quantities of CO2 from the air if they are to avoid a climate system running out of control. The state should live up its obligations to young people, reducing emissions 8 percent per year, which is what the science indicates is needed to stabilize climate.” “All developed nations and states should be doing no less than the global average emission reductions required to return to a safe level of 350 ppm by 2100,” said Julia Olson, executive director and chief legal counsel at Our Children’s Trust. “In fact, those who have caused the lion’s share of the problem and have the wealth to transition more quickly, should be declining at a more rapid pace…”

Background:
Starting in the late 1960’s Oregon led the nation with major environmental law; each decade major work was accomplished, to restore our rivers and watersheds, breakthrough land use reform, a groundbreaking bottle bill, many important environmental laws were passed and implemented, and in 2003 - 2008 Oregon began to address Climate Change and formed the Oregon Global Warming commission. From the web page: “The (OGWC) Commission’s general charge is to recommend ways to coordinate state and local efforts to reduce Oregon’s greenhouse gas emissions consistent with Oregon’s goals and to recommend efforts to help the state, local governments, businesses and residents prepare for the effects of global warming.

The Commission may recommend statutory and administrative changes, policy measures and other actions to be carried out by state and local governments, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and residents. Additionally, the Commission tracks and evaluates: assessments of global warming impacts on Oregon and the Northwest; existing GHG reduction policies and the advancement of regional, national and international policies; costs, risks and benefits of various strategies; progress toward reduction goals; technological advances; and other related tasks.
Through an outreach strategy, the Commission will educate Oregonians about the science and economic impacts of climate change and will promote actions to not only reduce GHG emissions, but to prepare for climate change impacts.

...the role [of the Commission] can be seen as roughly analogous to the role played by a legislative fiscal office; but rather than providing objective financial analysis, the Commission should provide objective analysis as to whether key policy and programmatic initiatives are consistent with Oregon’s climate change goals.
- excerpt from the Oregon Global Warming Commission’s Report to the Legislature 2009

The Commission continues and expands upon the work of the 2004 Governor’s Advisory Group on Global Warming, the Carbon Allocation Task Force, the Governor’s Vehicle Emissions Workgroup, and the Climate Change Integration Group to meet the state’s policy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions according to specific reduction goals.”

The League of Women Voters of Oregon asks that OGWC hold hearings and adopt in 2017 a NEW set of greenhouse gas reduction goals along with recommended actions for the Executive and Legislative Branches and private and not for profit sectors to take for the future of Oregon—for the children and for the health of all Oregonians. Please let the League know how we can assist in this effort.

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Attachment I: May 2016 Updated Health report related to Climate Change
Attachment II: LWVOR Climate Change Actions
Climate change is a significant threat to the health of the Oregonians and all American people. A new scientific federal assessment examines how climate change is already affecting human health and the changes that may occur in the future – May 2016 (Updated Health report related to Climate Change).

Major Health issues:

- Air pollution and airborne allergens will likely increase, worsening allergy and asthma conditions
- Extreme heat can be expected to cause an increase in the number of premature deaths,
- Warmer winter and spring temperatures are projected to lead to earlier annual onset of Lyme disease cases in the eastern United States...
- Increase the risks of water-related illnesses...
- Climate change, including rising temperatures and changes in weather extremes, is expected to increase the exposure of food to certain pathogens and toxins.
- **Climate change will have the largest health impact on vulnerable populations**
- Extreme weather and other events related to climate change will impact health

**Examples of Climate Impacts on Human Health (found at health 2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Driver</th>
<th>Exposure</th>
<th>Health Outcome</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Heat</td>
<td>More frequent, severe, prolonged heat events</td>
<td>Elevated temperatures</td>
<td>Heat-related death and illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Air Quality</td>
<td>Increasing temperatures and changing precipitation patterns</td>
<td>Worsened air quality (ozone, particulate matter, and higher pollen counts)</td>
<td>Premature death, acute and chronic cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooding</td>
<td>Rising sea level and more frequent or intense extreme precipitation, hurricanes, and storm surge events</td>
<td>Contaminated water, debris, and disruptions to essential infrastructure</td>
<td>Drowning, injuries, mental health consequences, gastrointestinal and other illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vector-Borne Infection (Lyme Disease)</td>
<td>Changes in temperature extremes and seasonal weather patterns</td>
<td>Earlier and geographically expanded tick activity</td>
<td>Lyme disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water-Related Infection (Vibrio vulnificus)</td>
<td>Rising sea surface temperature changes in precipitation and runoff affecting coastal salinity</td>
<td>Recreational water or shellfish contaminated with Vibrio vulnificus</td>
<td>Vibrio vulnificus induced diarrhea &amp; intestinal illness, wound and bloodstream infections, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food-Related Infection (Salmonella)</td>
<td>Increases in temperature, humidity, and season length</td>
<td>Increased growth of pathogens, seasonal shifts in incidence of Salmonella exposure</td>
<td>Salmonella infection, gastrointestinal outbreaks</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mental Health and Well-Being</td>
<td>Climate change impacts, especially extreme weather</td>
<td>Level of exposure to traumatic events, like disasters</td>
<td>Distress, grief, behavioral health disorders, social impacts, resilience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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[Health 2016 Global Change Report - Download]
The League of Women Voters of Oregon has approved a number of Climate Change advocacy actions including joining Renew Oregon, supporting City of Portland ‘No New Fossil Fuel infrastructure’ resolution, endorsing Clean Energy SB1547 and Climate Cap & Reinvest SB1574, signing onto the Our Children’s Trust (OCT) Oregon state lawsuit Amicus Brief. Local Leagues in Corvallis and Deschutes County have advocated for local Climate Plans.

In addition, LWVOR proposed three national climate change related resolutions that passed with large majorities at our recent League of Women Voters (LWVUS) national convention.

1) The LWVUS consider signing onto an Amicus Brief with the 21 youth plaintiffs from Our Children's Trust
2) The LWVUS support the ratification of the UN COP 21 Paris Agreement, and
3) The LWVUS should continue working for full implementation of the EPA Clean Power Plan, especially at the state level, as a first step, and should call on the White House to implement an updated science-based Climate Action Plan that stabilizes global warming by bringing CO2 levels down to no more than 350 ppm by 2100.

LWVUS has prioritized Climate Change along with a number of critical social policy issues including “Make Democracy Work” key campaign. These three resolutions also reflect LWVOR and LWVUS support for using all three branches of government to address the urgency of Climate Change.

The following is LWVOR “statement of interest’ in the OCT Oregon lawsuit Amicus Brief:

The League of Women Voters® of Oregon (LWVOR) is a grassroots, nonpartisan political non-profit organization that encourages informed and active participation in government in order to build better communities statewide. LWVOR’s purposes are to influence public policy through education and advocacy, and to provide support for League members and the League organization.

Since the 1950’s, the League has been at the forefront of national efforts to protect air, land and water resources. The League’s position is that members work to “Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment” with a focus on demanding pollution prevention. Additionally, the League’s Social Policy is very clear: “Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.”

The League used the League of Women Voters of the United States’ position on natural resources to “Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.” Our position on climate change states that “Global climate change is one of the most serious threats to the environment, health and economy of our nation. Recent scientific studies show that global warming is already causing environmental changes that will have significant global economic and social impacts. The League believes that now is the time to act on global climate change for this and future generations.”