



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-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 19, 2019

To: House Committee on Energy and Environment
Representative Ken Helm, Chair

Email: hee.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: **HB2860** – Safe Well Water Bill – **Support**

The League adopted a position on water quality in 1969, a position on Water Policy and Planning in 1977 and, after 3 years of study, adopted a combined Water Policy-Quality and Quantity position in 2011. Many League members—Oregonians across the state—get their drinking water from wells.

Well water contamination is common and can cause serious health impacts. This bill addresses well water contamination by arsenic, nitrate, and coliform bacteria (an indicator for microorganism contamination). During 1999-2000, approximately 50% of waterborne disease outbreaks in the US were caused by microorganisms, 64% of which were associated with private wells ([Lee 2002](#)). Nitrate in drinking water is linked to a variety of negative conditions, including the potentially fatal “blue baby” syndrome in infants ([WHO](#)). Oregon is particularly at risk for high levels of nitrate in well water ([Hoppe 2011](#)).

Requiring testing of rental properties is aligned with the requirement to test at the time of sale of real estate, and ensures that renters are protected and informed, just as homeowners are.

Using grant funds to help local governments and nonprofits assist in a groundwater contaminant education program stretches the ability of the Oregon Health Authority to do its work. Local efforts are often more receptive by citizens. This will encourage more testing and lead to addressing these contamination issues.

Offering free or low-cost testing in these areas will ensure that all can access testing despite income levels. We support providing a Safe Well Water Fund for low-income and rental property owners to assist with addressing well water contamination by repairing or replacement of wells or installing treatment systems.

We know that there are serious health concerns around well water contamination. As we experience more droughts, ground water contamination is likely to become an even greater issue. We urge your support for HB 2860.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Amelia Nestler in black ink.

Amelia Nestler
LWVOR Drinking Water Advisory Committee
Member

References:

- Hoppe, B. O., Harding, A. K., Staab, J., & Counter, M. (2011). Private well testing in Oregon from real estate transactions: an innovative approach toward a state-based surveillance system. *Public Health Reports*, 126(1), 107.
- Lee, S. H., Levy, D. A., Craun, G. F., Beach, M. J., & Calderon, R. L. (2002). Surveillance for waterborne-disease outbreaks--United States, 1999-2000. *Morbidity and mortality weekly report. Surveillance summaries (Washington, DC: 2002)*, 51(8), 1-47.
- World Health Organization. Water Related Diseases. Retrieved February 18, 2019 from https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/diseases-risks/diseases/methaemoglob/en/.