



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.

March 4, 2019

To: House Committee on Natural Resources
Representative Brad Witt, Chair
Members of the Committee

Re: **HB 2085** – Dam Safety Regulations – **Support**

The League has studied issues around seismic risks, adopting a position in March of 1995 that includes acknowledging the responsibility of government to evaluate dams “...that threaten population centers and taking remedial actions such as reinforcing dams, and developing maps and downstream notification procedures.” “Priority must be given to mitigation that protects human life and safeguards critical life support systems.”

In 2017 we [supported](#) POP 102 of the Water Resources Department’s agency budget, [SB 5542](#), which included the need to address dam safety. And we supported [HB 3427](#) that same year requiring high hazard dams to have an emergency action plan. SB 5702 in 2018 included a budget note: “The Water Resources Department (WRD) is directed to report to the Emergency Board, no later than December 2018, on publicly owned high-hazard dams in Oregon that have unsatisfactory or poor condition ratings. The report shall include existing WRD Dam Safety Program activities, such as dam inspection and Emergency Action Plans, as well as policy and budget recommendations related to the repair, remediation, and replacement of dams with significant risk of failure. The report should include the approximate cost to rehabilitate dam infrastructure with unsatisfactory and poor condition ratings and existing federal, state, and local resources currently available for this purpose.” That [report](#) and the [Legislative Fiscal Office analysis](#) provided guidance to the Water Resources Dept. in developing HB 2085.

The League does not pretend to have the expertise around the technicalities of this bill. However, we support the intent of this bill to address a neglected area of public safety in the state: addressing regulation of dams, particularly high hazard dams. The Water Resources Dept. needs the authority to work with owners of dams to assure they are maintained properly, are constructed and/or removed safely and provide for specific regulatory guidance on this very important public safety issue. **We urge support for HB 2085.** We would note that the state will need to partner with others to assure publicly-owned dams are repaired or replaced as needed. We recognize that this is one more burden on our already overly allocated revenue resources. But public safety needs to be prioritized.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Peggy Lynch in black ink.

Peggy Lynch
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator

Cc: Director Thomas Byler, Water Resources Dept. (Thomas.M.Byler@oregon.gov)