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February 6, 2020

To: House Committee on Water  
Representative Ken Helm, Chair  
Email: [hwtr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hwtr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Re: [HB 4077](#) – 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 improves required testing for sellers of real property where the water from a domestic well is the drinking water source for that residence. The use of an accredited lab improves the quality and reliability of the results.

Domestic wells often have 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). Two thirds of the outbreaks associated with bacteria involved *E. coli* (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).

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 4077.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone  
LWVOR President

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/methaemoglobin/en/](https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/diseases-risks/diseases/methaemoglobin/en/).