



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a 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 21, 2025

To: Co-Chairs [Frederick](#) and [E. Levy](#), and Members of the [Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources](#)

Re: [SB 5539](#) – Department. of State Lands (DSL) Budget – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources such as forests and the animals and plants living within them should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. This agency has a role in many of those state resources.

The Department of State Lands is critical to the management of many of Oregon’s public assets: Not only for the Common School Fund (CSF) lands, but for the protection of the waters of the state. The League has strong positions on water quality. We particularly note that **Oregon has a goal of no net loss of wetlands.** Oregon recognizes the role of wetlands in water quality and in flood management among other values. **The waters of the state are an important public asset.** Management of activities in these waters must be done carefully and with full application of state and federal regulations. The League participated in rulemaking as a legislative directive from [HB 2238](#) (2023): OAR 141 Removal-Fill and Wetland Delineation Fees (See [this website for details](#)). **The League supports a shared system of funding as we believe the public also needs to be represented in the application process.**

We support POP 201: Protecting Wetlands and Waterways that supports timely, responsive service in wetlands and waterways programs by adding nine new positions and making four existing limited duration positions permanent. \$3.1 million Other Funds. The additional staff will help local governments better define wetlands to help determine which wetlands need to be set aside and not counted as “developable” lands.

We support POPs 500 and 502 related to housing production and linked to POP 201 above. POP 500 would help communities prepare land for housing production by adding one position to ensure timely assistance for local governments. **\$221,288 General Fund.** POP 502 would add a dedicated staff position to focus on housing-related permits. **\$221,288 General Fund.**

We support POP 204 that would replace a ‘90s information technology system with a powerful modern system that will improve customer experience by expanding online services and increase DSL’s ability to provide excellent stewardship of lands and waters. Continues one limited duration position. \$3.5 million Other Funds.

We support POP 205: Resources for GIS to address current inadequate GIS resources, which significantly impact the department’s efficient and effective oversight of lands and waterways, forest and estuary research, and ability to support communities. This package adds four permanent positions. \$809,716 Other Funds. Again, updating data availability will support better management of Common School Fund land management as well as the other DSL lands.

The Portland Harbor Cleanup effort must continue. The League of Women Voters of Portland in particular has been an active commenter during the decision-making process. We look forward to when the harbor can offer the opportunity for both recreational and economic uses. We support the state's diligence in protecting the state's liability and **we support the department's request (POPs 211 and 212) for continuing this important work.**

While addressing the Portland Superfund Site, it is important to also address **the Lower Willamette River Management Plan with POP 213.** The plan needs to be updated to reflect available science, existing and future conditions, community priorities for use and development, and **to integrate climate resilience considerations and goals.** \$500,000 Other Funds. The League has strong positions related to addressing the effects of our changing climate.

The League has been a longtime advocate for the South Slough Reserve, an incredible special place for research, for educational opportunities and for recreation. Coos County League members have been volunteers for many years. We support the ongoing efforts to maintain this asset and **encourage the department to seek further federal funding** to expand the reserve as willing sellers appear, to continue repairs as needed and continue to work with the local tribes nearby. This special asset is also helping us better understand the effects of climate change on our many state estuaries—in fact, estuaries all along the West Coast. This session **we support POP 203** that adds two permanent positions and reclassifies an existing management position. \$423,662 Other Funds and **POP 206** that corrects a funding gap in South Slough Reserve's base budget, which has not kept pace with the cost of goods and services essential for Reserve operations. \$390,000 Other Funds.

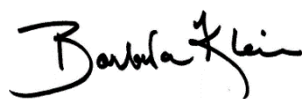
The League supported funding to reduce the cost burden on the Common School Fund of removing abandoned and derelict vessels a number of years ago and believes that the Program created and funded in 2023 deserves our continued support with POP 202. The package addresses the impact of hazardous vessels on Oregon's publicly owned waterways. It makes permanent three limited duration positions and adds a permanent risk evaluation position. \$11.2 million ADV Fund.

The League believes that POP 217, the proposed pilot project for Geological Carbon Sequestration, is worth supporting in order to gather the geologic data and information necessary to pursue these underground projects on school lands and in Oregon. Up to \$10 million Other Funds. Along with a POP in the Dept. of Environmental Quality budget, this opportunity could provide for both addressing climate and adding value to these basalt basin lands owned by the Common School Fund.

As mentioned above, we support DSL's continuing work to obtain federal funding for these important programs so **we support carrying forward federal funding in POPS 210, 214, 215 and 216** for the **South Slough Reserve, wetlands and waters projects, and the Elliott State Research Forest.**

As you can see, this department has a wide variety of responsibilities. Administrative leadership and staff support for their multiple missions has been impressive. **We appreciated the enthusiasm with which the department director shared the agency's many programs and will miss her leadership.** We look forward to the selection of a new Director with the same understanding of the value of this agency to Oregon—to its children and to our natural assets. Your consideration of the various requests in this budget is appreciated. **We urge your Support for SB 5539 and the POPs requested.**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Barbara Klein
Acting President, LWVOR



Peggy Lynch
Natural Resources Coordinator

cc: [Vicki Walker](#), Director, Dept. of State Lands