



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-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 21, 2021

To: [House Committee on Education](#)
Chair, Representative Teresa Alonso Leon
Vice-Chair, Representative Courtney Neron
Vice-Chair, Representative Suzanne Weber

Re: [HB 2697](#) Requires education provider to prohibit use or display of any symbols of hate on school property or in education program. – **Support**

The League of Women Voters believes that an equitable, quality public education is critical for students. The League believes that governments at all levels share the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

LWV Lane County recently published a study “[HATE CRIMES AND HATE SPEECH](#) What Can we Do in The Schools?” The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that the highest percentage of all reported hate incidents since the 2016 election were in elementary and secondary schools. White nationalist and alt-right movements are intentionally recruiting young people [...] because their views and opinions about the world are not fully formed and they can be more easily persuaded.

It’s critical that Oregon schools provide a safe environment for all youth which is free of hate and bias symbols and related behaviors. It’s also necessary to follow up any incidents with an age-appropriate learning moment.

Oregon educators and administrators are doing lots to fight hate crimes. [HB 2697](#) will offer additional tools. A report on PBS, November 19, 2019, titled [How These Oregon Teachers Are Fighting Back Against White Nationalism](#), discusses a toolkit that is being used to combat this trend. The toolkit, [Confronting White Nationalism in Schools](#), published by the non-profit Western States Center, provides context and guidance around the issue of white nationalism and alt-right recruitment of young people, and provides scenarios that might happen in a school community. From the toolkit, “It’s for every stakeholder in a school community... students, teachers and parents. The toolkit describes several categories of incidents, from anonymous use of hate symbols or speech — such as swastikas — to students organizing white nationalist activity inside or outside school. Every category contains recommended actions for each type of stakeholder, as well as pointers on what *not* to do. According to the toolkit it's critical to engage the whole school community so that they are able to openly talk about issues of white nationalism, white supremacy, racial justice, while reinforcing values that include everyone...” (excerpted from pages 7 and 8)

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President



Chris Vogel
LWVOR Education Coordinator



Claudia Keith
Human Rights Portfolio

CC: Chief Sponsors: Representatives Smith DB, Gomberg, Fahey, Senator Manning Jr
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