



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

MEASURE: HB 4081  
EXHIBIT: 9  
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& WATER  
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February 7, 2012

To: House Energy, Environment and Water Committee  
Rep. Vic Gilliam and Rep. Jules Bailey, Co-Chairs

From: League of Women Voters of Oregon  
Susann Kaltwasser, Solid Waste Specialist

Re: HB 4081 – Pyrolysis of waste plastic - CONCERNS

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We would like to express our concerns about HB 4081 in its current form. We believe there is the potential for unintended consequences in applying a “recycling” label to the conversion of waste plastics to oil. We do not dispute that pyrolysis may be an effective “energy recovery” technology if sufficient environmental safeguards are in place, but we are concerned that designating it as “recycling” undermines the hierarchy of the waste disposal pyramid and could have economic repercussions for the recycling industry. These concerns are based on League positions on solid waste and effective resource management.

Our first concern relates to Oregon’s recycling laws that have established a hierarchy for solid waste disposal:

- 1.) reduce the amount of waste generated
- 2.) re-use materials for their original intended use
- 3.) recycle what can’t be re-used
- 4.) compost what can’t be re-used or recycled
- 5.) recover energy from what cannot be re-used, recycled or composted

According to this hierarchy, the pyrolysis of waste plastic would not fall in the “recycle” stage but rather in the latter “energy recovery” stage, because it utilizes what cannot be re-used, recycled, or composted. It also does not accomplish one of the primary goals of recycling, which is to reduce the consumption of raw materials. In other words, it does not reduce the amount of oil used to make plastic, and it does not reduce the amount of plastic produced.

The League’s second concern is that HB 4081 does not provide a clear definition of “waste plastics that cannot be economically recycled.” Without a precise definition it is conceivable that ALL plastics might fit this category, since it is difficult for recycled plastic to economically compete with the oil by-product. We fear this could undermine the intent of recycling legislation as well as undermine the plastic recycling industry, likely causing loss of jobs, since pyrolysis would create far fewer jobs than recycling.

We urge committee members to consider alternatives to a recycling designation for the pyrolysis of waste plastic. Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns.