

**Written Testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural  
Resources, in Opposition to HJR 25  
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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Co-chair Witt and members of the committee:

Oregon Environmental Council opposes HJR 25, which proposes to amend the Oregon constitution making fees or taxes on water wells illegal.

When a person constructs, operates, or abandons a water well, it does not only affect the water and land directly under that person's private property. Groundwater systems are complex and often interconnected, and those systems extend beyond property lines. The way a well is constructed and operated impacts the water table, which can result in drawing down nearby wells and altering flows in groundwater-fed streams. Improperly managed or abandoned wells can also become entry points for pollutants that are very difficult and costly to remove from groundwater once it is contaminated.

These are examples of reasons why regulatory oversight of water wells to protect water quality and groundwater levels is to the benefit of well owners, public health, and the environment. Seventy percent of Oregonians rely on groundwater for all or a portion of their drinking water. Protecting this precious resource is something worth paying for.

That is why we believe it would be bad policy to establish a constitutional amendment prohibiting fees on water wells. While nobody is proposing to establish any such fees at this time, it may make sense to do so at some point in the future. A constitutional amendment is not the place to address concerns about fees that may or may not be proposed one day.