



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

June 3, 2013

To: House Committee on Rules  
Representative Chris Garrett, Chair

Re: O&C Proposals    Comments on HB 2206, HB 3404, SB 496, SB 581 and HJR 2

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a non-partisan, grassroots, political organization that encourages informed citizen participation in government. The growing inability of many Oregon counties to provide basic services, such as public safety, is of great concern.

Several counties such as Josephine, Curry and Lane face insolvency. There are several causes for county difficulties in balancing revenues and expenditures. These include three recessions in the last 15 years, 20 years of funding limits under Measures #5 (1990) and #50 (1997), and the impacts of both growing populations or dwindling growth in rural counties.

We have been carefully monitoring the work of the Task Force on the O&C Counties as it has worked through recommendations for addressing these serious issues. We believe that government should share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare. This would encompass the provisions in HB 2206 that relate to elections functions under certain specified conditions. It would also include provision for assistance for public safety, as stated in HB 3404. SB 496, which clarifies the use of road funds to be used for patrolling to include public safety interventions by sheriffs, and SB 581, which extends the sunset on fiscal assistance to counties, fits under this umbrella.

We also believe that the Oregon Constitution should have the authority to provide for local government flexibility to meet future needs. This issue is addressed in HJR2, which grants the ability to merge counties if such action were approved by county residents.

There are no easy solutions to the fiscal crisis in Oregon, either at the local or state levels. We commend the efforts of the Task Force. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Robin Wisdom  
President

Kappy Eaton  
Governance Coordinator