



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON

February 25, 2014

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Co-Chairs Senator Betsy Johnson and Representative Bob Jenson and Committee Members

Re: Regional Solutions HB 4015A with -11 Amendments

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. One of the basic principles of the League of Women Voters is the belief that democratic government requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making records publicly available.

The League supports the concepts around Regional Solutions Teams as ways to encourage state agencies to work together on behalf of local needs. We are seeing an increase in interagency cooperation and the culture of working together on behalf of Oregonians is improving.

We appreciate the work of Greg Wolf of the Governor's Office in amending the original bill to address our concern that the grant and loan programs mentioned in HB 4015 first honor the criteria set by rule or law as to the purpose of those programs. If, after those criteria are met, applicants can show a nexus to a Regional Priority, that fact should be considered.

We have attached a sheet with the missions of the natural resource agencies mentioned in HB 4015A. While we are always interested in seeing state agency programs become more effective and efficient, we also expect them to adhere to their purposes. As a member of the Oregon Conservation Network, we supported natural resource agency budgets last session that would increase staffing for both protecting and permitting responsibilities. The League specifically testified in support of three additional staff for the Dept. of Environmental Quality whose jobs would have a direct nexus to Regional Solutions. We were most pleased when the Governor and this Legislature increased General Funds for the programs run by our natural resource agencies. We are simply asking that those funds be used for the purposes you have assigned.

With an increased expectation that natural resource agencies will participate in Regional Solutions Teams without an appreciable increase in staffing, the League was (and continues to be) concerned that the protection of our land, air and water might be lessened in this increased demand on their time and resources. That is why Section 4 in the proposed -11 amendments is important: these agencies need to thoughtfully consider how they might assist in Regional Solutions Teams and whether additional staffing will be needed to accomplish that task.

We also appreciate the promise in Section 5 of the -11s around the development of a public process in selecting Regional Priorities. With the increase in state funding for projects, the League believes a broad discussion and agreement should occur before monies are spent. We are

concerned that the bill does not clearly address the role of the Legislature in the oversight of any state funding provided to Regional Priorities. It simply memorializes the current Executive Branch program. This issue was brought to your attention in November by an LFO Memo: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/201311/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/30937>

The League notes that the recent Oregon Values and Beliefs Survey (www.truenorthoregon.org) places Oregon's environment third behind only support for education and public safety. Staff and monies allocated to natural resource programs need to be spent on protecting that environment while processing and administering any permits required under state law. That protection enhances our economy as it encourages today's industries and workers to locate here.

The League thanks the Governor's staff for allowing us to participate in the HB 2620 Steering Committee. Our members have learned a great deal about the Regional Solutions program. We want that to be true of other Oregonians. The way to do that is to increase visibility of this increasingly important program.

Sincerely,



Robin Wisdom
President



Peggy Lynch
Natural Resources Coordinator

Cc: Senator Richard Devlin and Representative Peter Buckley, Co-Chairs, Joint Ways and Means Committee
Senator Chris Edwards and Representative Ben Unger, Co-Chairs, Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Michael Jordan, Governor's Chief Operating Officer
Greg Wolf, Governor's Intergovernmental and Regional Solutions Advisor
Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resources Advisor

Attached Below:

Natural Resource Agencies Mission Statements

HB 2620 Report, Executive Summary

(Full report available at http://www.oregon.gov/COO/ELT/Documents/HB2620_Plan_Final.pdf)

Mission Statements of Natural Resource Agencies – From department websites

Dept. of Agriculture: The mission of the Oregon Department of Agriculture is 1) to ensure food safety and provide consumer protection; 2) to protect the natural resource base for present and future generations of farmers and ranchers, and 3) to promote economic development and expand market opportunities for Oregon agricultural products.

Water Resources: The Department's mission is to serve the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management through two key goals: to directly address Oregon's water supply needs, and to restore and protect streamflows and watersheds in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon's ecosystems, economy, and quality of life.

Dept. of Fish and Wildlife: Our mission is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

Forestry: To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.

Dept. of State Lands: The mission of the Department of State Lands is to ensure a legacy for Oregonians and their public schools through sound stewardship of lands, wetlands, waterways, unclaimed property, estates and the Common School Fund.

Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries: DOGAMI's mission is to provide earth science information and regulation to make Oregon safe and prosperous.

State Marine Board: Serving Oregon's recreational boating public through education, enforcement, access, and environmental stewardship for a safe and enjoyable experience.

Dept. of Environmental Policy: DEQ's mission is to be a leader in restoring, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land and water. DEQ works collaboratively with Oregonians for a healthy, sustainable environment.

Dept. of Land Conservation and Development: To help communities and citizens plan for, protect and improve the built and natural systems that provide a high quality of life. In partnership with citizens and local governments, we foster sustainable and vibrant communities and protect our natural resources legacy.

Dept. of Transportation: To provide a safe, efficient transportation system that supports economic opportunity and livable communities for Oregonians.

Housing and Community Services Department: Provide leadership that enables Oregonians to gain housing, become self-sufficient and achieve prosperity.

Oregon Business Development Department: Business Oregon works to create, retain, expand and attract businesses that provide sustainable, living-wage jobs for Oregonians through public-private partnerships, leveraged funding and support of economic opportunities for Oregon companies and entrepreneurs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (from HB 2620 Report to Legislature, Feb. 2014)

Introduction

Oregon state government is changing the way it supports community and economic development in local communities. The state is moving from a system where local communities adjust priorities to fit within existing bureaucratic structures to one where state government adjusts its structure to support and address local priorities. The findings and recommendations in the plan will serve as a springboard for both short- and medium- term alignment work as the state seeks to better serve Oregonians.

HB 2620

HB 2620 directed the Governor, in coordination with the Director of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (“DAS”), to develop a plan to align state economic and community development programs with regional priorities to present to the 2014 Legislature. A diverse project steering team ensured multiple perspectives from local, regional and state government, as well as two advocacy groups. Natural resource agencies also participated in the project work and will be holding additional discussions in the coming weeks.

Public Engagement

Nearly 2,200 Oregonians participated in an interactive, statewide survey to identify barriers that prevent growth and prosperity on a regional level, and to help envision new ways of delivering services.

Survey Findings

1. At least three in four participants felt the priorities established by the Regional Solutions Committee in their area match their own.
2. A majority of all regions felt the state is effective in helping regions and industries meet their priorities.
3. One in four participants experienced duplication of services.
4. Respondents in the Southern and Eastern regions feel likely to experience service gaps.

The project team analyzed the responses thematically and constructed three alignment scenarios – addressing several key issues that were common across the state.

Regional Meetings

Regional meetings in Bend, Eugene, La Grande, Medford, and Portland provided Oregonians an opportunity to review, rate, and comment on alignment scenarios pertaining to: industrial land site development, flexible funding to seize immediate opportunities, and a common application for site certification.

Regional Meeting Findings

1. Many participants saw community and economic development as a competitive process vis-à-vis other regions and states, and felt a sense of urgency to make sensible reforms.
2. Participants emphasized the importance of the state coordinating its efforts with local authorities and agencies in support of locally-established objectives.
3. Some had concerns that changing rules and processes could undermine existing land-use and environmental regulations.

Overall, participants received all three scenarios positively, appreciating the state’s desire to better align its efforts with local objectives and resources and to attract and pursue development opportunities more effectively. The ability to be more flexible and act more quickly and efficiently is important across all regions. Participants would like to see more scenarios which, by region, develop the region’s workforce, increase community capacity, develop small businesses more robustly—all while preserving the natural resources that make Oregon’s regions livable and enjoyable.

Proposed Recommendations

Short-term proposed recommendations:

- Aligning grant, loan and technical assistance resources for industrial site readiness, from the identification of land through the finalization of development-ready sites.
- In awarding grant, loan, and incentive funds to projects, agencies will consider and prioritize projects that advance regional priorities.
- Create a common application through Business Oregon for that acts as a “one stop shop” for permitting.

Medium-term proposed recommendations:

- Increase staffing for Regional Solutions Centers.
- Identify synergies between workforce re-design efforts and regional priorities.
- Improve communication and integration of state and local Business Services.

Though regulatory streamlining is a theme that permeates the recommendations, no recommendation will lower existing regulatory standards or law. Public input will continue to be central in the next steps of the alignment process.