



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

March 9, 2015

To: House Rules Committee
Representative Val Hoyle, Chair
zoe.larmer@state.or.us

Re: HB 2945 regarding transparent precinct data for the redistricting process

The League of Women Voters is a 95 year old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League supports the concept of precinct data transparency in HB 2945.

During the last redistricting process in 2011, the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting used precinct-level data during the partisan negotiations, which resulted in the new district plans. However, this precinct data was not made public, and it was gathered and developed by the political parties at great expense. It was also poorly correlated with census block boundaries, and it had to be reconciled between the political parties before negotiations could proceed.

The League believes that all precinct-level data used in the redistricting process should be made public and shared when it is first available with any interested persons or the media. Such data might include precinct registration data and voting history from the Secretary of State, or demographic data from the Census Bureau. The League believes that there are easy fixes for all these issues:

1. Require that Oregon join the Census Bureau's block boundary suggestion program, which would largely sync up the boundaries of precincts and census blocks. This would virtually eliminate any cost of correlating precinct data with census blocks.
2. Immediately make available any precinct-level data that is used in the redistricting process on a legislative website.
3. Also provide the same precinct data to the public in an online redistricting mapping tool, similar to that provided by several other states with excellent results. This would allow the public to participate in the process, to quickly evaluate various proposals, or to even make new proposals.

We recognize that HB 2945 does not include all these concepts. This is because our Redistricting Matters Coalition did a poor job communicating during the drafting of HB 2945. We understand that an amendment is being drafted to correct these shortcomings. In any case, we urge you to move a bill forward on this subject during this session, far ahead of the highly political time of the next redistricting process in 2021.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Robin Wisdom
LWVOR President

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