



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON

June 8, 2015

To: Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Senator Richard Devlin and Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Committee  
[WaysandMeans.NaturalResourcesSub@state.or.us](mailto:WaysandMeans.NaturalResourcesSub@state.or.us)

RE: HB 3415A: Study and possible rulemaking on hydraulic fracturing – COMMENTS

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots nonpartisan, political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. Since the 1950's, the League has been at the forefront of national efforts to protect air, land and water resources. The League's position is that members work to "Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment" with a focus on demanding pollution prevention. Additionally, the League's Social Policy is very clear; "Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans."

We originally supported HB 3415 that would have placed a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing as it is consistent with the League's national position and focus on pollution prevention, and justice and public safety for all people. The amended bill calls for a study of the process and rulemaking that would clarify "best practices" should it occur in Oregon. We have no quarrel with studying issues, including this one. But, **this session, we believe that the legislature needs to weigh the cost of this rulemaking against the cost of, for instance, natural hazards rulemaking in HB 2633.** We believe the state is vulnerable to landslides, extreme flooding, coastal erosion and other very real known natural hazards whereas fracking is less likely occur in the near future in Oregon. What happened in Oso, WA and recently in Wimberley and San Marcos, TX could well happen here. When considering funding tradeoffs, the League believes focusing on the near term makes both public safety and fiscal sense.

Below are reasons that we find "fracking" unsafe and unhealthy:

We refer to a very extensive science-based report recently conducted by the New York State Department of Health which addresses environmental impacts and health hazards as reasons for supporting the ban. The research relies on multiple studies conducted across the country and highlights many concerns:

- Respiratory health: The report cites the dangers of methane emissions from natural gas drilling in Texas and Pennsylvania, which have been linked to asthma and other breathing issues. Another study found that 39 percent of residents in southern Pennsylvania who lived within one kilometer of a fracking site developed upper-respiratory problems, compared with 18 percent of those who lived more than two kilometers away.

- Drinking water: Shallow methane-migration underground could seep into drinking water, one study found, contaminating wells. Another found brine from deep shale formations in groundwater aquifers. The report also refers to a study of fracking communities in the Appalachian Plateau where they found methane in 82 percent of drinking water samples, and that concentrations of the chemical were six times higher in homes close to natural gas wells. Ethane was 23 times higher in homes close to fracking sites as well.
- Seismic activity: The report cites studies from Ohio and Oklahoma that explain how fracking can trigger earthquakes. Another found that fracking near Preese Hall in the United Kingdom resulted in a 2.3 magnitude earthquake, as well as 1.5 magnitude earthquake.
- Climate change: Excess methane can be released into the atmosphere, which contributes to global warming.
- Soil contamination: One analysis of a natural gas site found elevated levels of radioactive waste in the soil, potentially the result of surface spills.
- The community: The report refers to problems such as noise and odor pollution, citing a case in Pennsylvania where gas harvesting was linked to huge increases in automobile accidents and heavy truck crashes.
- Health complaints: Residents near active fracking sites reported having symptoms such as nausea, abdominal pain, nosebleeds, and headaches according to studies (Bamberger\_Oswald\_NS22\_in\_press.pdf). A study in rural Colorado, which examined 124,842 births between 1996 and 2009 found that those who lived closest to natural gas development sites had a 30 percent increase in congenital heart conditions. The group of births closest to development sites also had a 100-percent increased chance of developing neural tube defect.
- Other issues associated with Fracking:
  - California and a number of other states have had problematic underground aquifer contamination issues caused by fracking related waste materials illegally dumped into old wells. In addition, California and other western states effected by drought conditions are very aware of the excessive volume of valuable agriculture and or drinking water used in fossil fuel fracking processes.

While we have grave concerns related to hydraulic fracturing and would prefer a moratorium at least until we study this issue, there are more pressing issues before the legislature this session that should be funded.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President



Peggy Lynch and Claudia Keith  
Natural Resources Team

cc: Representative Ken Helm