



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 21, 2017

To: House Committee on Energy and Environment
Representative Ken Helm, Chair
Representatives Mark Johnson and Karin Power, Vice Chairs

Re: HB 2706 – Water Rights Management Fee - **SUPPORT**

The League has strong positions on both water quality and quantity. We adopted positions back in 1969, 1977 and 1985. Recently we spent three years restudying water issues, adopting updated new consolidated water quality and quantity positions in 2011. We were active participants in the development of the 2012 Integrated Water Resources Strategy, as well as the update being completed this year.

In 2012-2013, we watched the Water Resources Commission (WRC) Revenue Subcommittee consider a number of funding options so the department could “carry out its mission and legal responsibilities”. Their guiding principles: *“Those who benefit should pay; Solutions should be equitable among water user groups; Fees should be dedicated to the purpose for which they are collected; Logistical considerations to implement the revenue sources must be reasonable”*.

They considered 29 funding options as a result of a conversation with over 30 organizations. Staff researched these ideas and presented information to the WRC for consideration. They again engaged stakeholders in the discussions and provided regular updates to the full Commission. The conclusion of the WRC in 2013 was to recommend a water rights management fee. The fee would be used to provide field staff and science-based data to support and protect the 85,000 (now over 88,000) water rights holders, both senior and junior. When the fee was not passed in 2013, this concept took a rest. But, with the current budget shortfall, the serious drought we recently experienced and the recognition that we need more data to assure we have groundwater in the future, it is time to revisit this fee. The bill before you is restructured to address concern from the 2013 effort.

The League understands the concerns around equity and that many water rights holders are in the agricultural community. That industry, second in Oregon, is the most stable of our traded sector industries and critical to Oregon’s economy. So, we support the cap embodied in the bill.

We also support the charge and cap on municipalities or providers of water for municipal purposes. We have all along supported an equitable fee for all water rights holders.

The waters of Oregon belong to all Oregonians. Yet we do not currently provide the monies to adequately protect and manage the use of that water for now and for future Oregonians—for

drinking, for agriculture and for industrial use. We must find a way to fund this department in a way that these water rights holders' rights are protected as well as the general public's ownership of those waters.

We ask that you support HB 2706 as a stable funding source for water management and send HB 2706 to Ways and Means so that water rights are effectively managed in Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



Peggy Lynch
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator

Reference: LWVOR's Water Studies: <http://lwvor.org/study-archives/lwvorstudyarchivelibrary/#water>

cc: Tom Byler, Director, Water Resources Department (Thomas.M.Byler@state.or.us)
Lauri Aunan, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Advisor (Lauri.Aunan@oregon.gov)