



**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.

February 5, 2018

To: House Human Services and Housing Committee
Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
Email: hhs.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: **HJR 201** – Constitutional Amendment to Allow Local Governments to bond for Affordable Housing – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available, have the right to an income and/or services to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care. State and local governments should assist by establishing effective agencies to aid, promote, coordinate and supplement the housing programs of the federal government and the private sector.

LWVOR supports House Joint Resolution (HJR) 201 and urges its passage. HJR 201 would refer a constitutional amendment (Section 9, Article XI) to the voters that, if passed, would allow municipal corporations to use bonded indebtedness to finance the capital costs of affordable housing with some limitations. If voters adopt the amendment at the next general election, local jurisdictions would be granted the authority to seek voter approval for bonds to be used for the purpose of developing affordable housing in their communities. The bond measure would establish the level of affordability based on local needs.

The amendment further would allow local jurisdictions to access federal, private, and other funding sources when utilizing bond proceeds to develop low-income housing. This currently is not an option. In addition, the municipality would no longer be required to own and operate the housing. The City of Portland recently passed an affordable housing bond and, although local leaders anticipate a positive impact on the affordable housing supply, they regret the inability to access federal, foundation, nonprofit and other resources that would make the bond money go further. The ownership requirement also has complicated the process because the city has limited experience owning or operating housing projects. Smaller jurisdictions have even less capacity in this area.

LWVOR urges you to pass HJR 201. It would offer local jurisdictions the flexibility they need to address Oregon's housing crisis. The voters in those jurisdictions will have the final voice. Families and individuals throughout the state are making difficult choices on a daily basis because housing costs have increased so dramatically. Please give communities this additional tool that would help them meet the challenge.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Debbie Aiona in black ink.

Debbie Aiona
LWVOR Housing Portfolio

cc: Speaker Tina Kotek
House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson
House Minority Leader Mike McLane
Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick
Senate Minority Leader Jackie Winters