



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-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, 2019

To: House Energy and Environment Committee
Representative Ken Helm, Chair

Email: hee.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: **HB 2623**—Prohibits use of hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas exploration and production—**SUPPORT**

Since the 1950's, the League of Women Voters has been at the forefront of national efforts to protect air, land and water resources. The national League's position "**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. At the 2018 National LWV Convention, the following "Climate Test" resolution passed almost unanimously: "The League of Women Voters supports a set of climate assessment criteria that ensures that energy policies align with current climate science. These criteria require that the latest climate science be used to evaluate proposed energy policies and major projects in light of the globally-agreed-upon goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C, informed by the successful spirit of global cooperation as affirmed in the UN COP 21 Paris agreement."

Our testimony in support of HB 2623 is consistent with the League's national position and focus on pollution prevention, and justice and public safety for all people.

It is in consideration of the facts detailed below that leads the League to ask for your support for HB 2623. The League has supported net zero greenhouse gas emissions before 2050 by implementing 8% (based on 2016 science) annual GHGE reduction starting now. There are known issues with hazardous waste that may involve coal bed methane (CBM) operations. Additionally, we are very concerned about "other ingredients" mentioned in this 2011 OPB article, "[Oregon Gas Drilling: Different Challenges Between Sandstone and Coal Beds](#)".

Historically, fracking in Oregon has been employed in an attempt to release gas from CBM fields in the Coos Bay area. Past and current efforts to develop those fields have faced challenges, but the only [commercially viable gas flow rates](#) that have ever been achieved there resulted from fracking. The [fracking techniques](#) used for CBM development are different from those used for shale gas extraction, and some of the impacts differ, but the potential negative impacts of the use of fracking in Oregon are still significant.

- **Climate impacts:** Whether fracking is performed on CBM or shale gas fields, the gas produced is largely methane. The science is now clear that methane is a powerful greenhouse gas and must be curtailed as vigorously as carbon emissions. The gas may be flared at the well site, and it leaks ongoing from transport and storage infrastructure. And finally, it adds to overall emissions when burned as the end use.
- **Energy:** Development of new fossil fuel resources comes at the expense of clean, sustainable energy development.

- **Water pollution:** Fracking has been found to cause the contamination of surface and groundwater (including drinking water) with toxic chemicals used in fracking fluids. Whether assisted by fracking or not, CBM extraction releases hundreds of thousands of gallons of “produced” water per day—“ancient water” long trapped in coal fields. It is saline and contaminated with chemicals that may include carcinogenic hydrocarbons, heavy metals, and possibly radioactive materials. Some studies show that shallow methane migration underground can seep into drinking water, including by contaminating wells. While in some CBM developments produced water is disposed of by reinjecting it back into the ground, Coos Bay projects have all pursued a DEQ permit allowing them to treat and then discharge produced water into the Davis Slough five miles south of Coos Bay.¹
- **Water use:** A frequent result of extensive dewatering required to bring out trapped gas in CBM extraction is depletion of area aquifers and altered stream flow patterns, thus disrupting the spawning and rearing habitat of salmonid populations. Domestic and agricultural reliance on existing aquifers could be jeopardized, as well.
- **Seismic activity:** Fracking and the extraction development it facilitates increase the risks of [earthquakes](#) which in turn increases the risk of damage to, and leakages from, gas wells. However, the location of potential CBM fields in Oregon’s coastal regions so near to the Cascadia Subduction Zone raises special risks.
- **Health [Risk Study](#): State of [New York](#) and four EU [countries](#).**
- **Socio-economic impacts on communities:** Fracking can drive “[boom and bust](#)” cycles in local communities, contributing to social disruption and undermining more sustainable economies, including those involving clean energy development.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation, and we urge you to pass HB 2623 to protect Oregon from this damaging practice.



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LWVOR Climate Change Portfolio

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¹ Oregon DEQ issued National Permit Discharge Elimination System permit No. #116710 to Westport Energy LLC in 2007. The permit was renewed in 2012 and remains active until 2020. DEQ must approve engineering plans before the company can install a treatment system and any discharge can take place. Oregon DEQ, “Curzon Energy/Coos Bay Energy LLC,” Initial Report, March 7, 2018.