



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a 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 16, 2023

To: Co-Chairs [Dembrow](#) and [Pham](#) and Members of the Committee

[Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources](#)

Re: [SB 5510](#) – Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries Budget – Comments

**The League of Women Voters has a comprehensive position adopted in 1995 on Hazards**, a part of which is: *The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that all levels of government share the responsibility of coordinating, implementing and funding an effective program to mitigate Oregon's earthquake and tsunami hazards. Priority must be given to mitigation that protects human life and safeguards critical life support systems. When siting critical facilities, tsunami run up and inundation as well as seismic factors such as severe ground shaking, liquefaction, massive landslide potential, and subsidence should be considered. Geological reports identifying property at risk should be on file and accessible to the public. Property that poses extreme hazards should be designated as unbuildable. We also have strong positions in support of our land use planning program of which Goal 7, Natural Hazards, is an important element. There are critical linkages among agencies' duties regarding Oregonians' public safety regarding this very important issue.*

**We more recently studied Hard Rock Mining and adopted positions:** *The League of Women Voters of Oregon recognizes society's need for key minerals, and also the potential harmful environmental, health, and human impacts that mining for these minerals can produce. Hard rock mining in Oregon is governed by a complex and interconnected set of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and permitting processes, which include provisions for environmental protection, economic evaluation, and reclamation of mining sites. The League supports an approach to the overall regulation and oversight of hard rock mining.*

With these positions, **we support POP 101 to implement the paperless permitting program.** In 2021, we were interested in seeing this agency work with the Dept. of Environmental Quality on a shared e-permitting system. Since it was decided that DOGAMI would continue to move forward as a separate agency, it is important for this system to be funded. It is unclear if the source of some of these monies could be bonding. We assume the Stagegate process will be followed to assure positive implementation. Then we assume that the program, once up and running, will be self-supporting by fees to users of the system. With that in mind, we also will support [SB 221](#) and [SB 222](#) to assure the system, once active, can collect those fees.

**We support POP 104 to continue the work on the proposed gold mine near Vale, Oregon.** The League is monitoring this permit process because it is **the first time Oregon has used a consolidated permitting process.** Instead of the applicant having to file for a permit from each pertinent agency, the process brings all agencies together. The League continues to ask the agencies and the applicant if this process is more efficient while also addressing the missions of each agency. For the League, it is important that the agencies' missions are being met while fairly adjudicating the outcome of the application.

We appreciate the intent of **POP 106** to assure that permits are timely processed, but are not convinced that our General Funds should be spent on these staff. **The MLRR program has been self-sufficient and we believe it should continue to be.** We did hear from the agency's presentation that some monies might be needed to access federal monies that could be coming to Oregon. If that is true, we can modify our concern about the fund shift.

Again, with **POP 107**, we have long complained that the MLRR program was not addressing compliance. But that means that **the money for this program should be a part of the cost of those receiving permits and NOT General Funds.** We were most pleased by the agency's attention to their Key Performance Measures. And, for years, LWVOR has pointed out the mismatch between the lack of success in meeting KPM #4 and the agency's addressing it. We hear the agency's plan to work toward meeting KPM #4 but believe that the permitting community should be responsible for these costs.

To be clear, LWVOR has long advocated for General Fund support for the GS&S program because that division addresses public safety, including providing data on tsunami lines and landslide areas. And now is helping with groundwater data. We understand that DOGAMI's LIDAR information is open source—public information and available to all. For years this division had to rely **ONLY** on grant funding. So we are pleased that the legislature has acknowledged their value to the state by providing some General Funds to GS&S. Fluctuating grant funding, the life blood of this division, continues to have an impact on personnel. But the MLRR program should continue to be fee-funded.

Lastly, we must take the opportunity to applaud the agency's new management and focus on financial reporting. For many of us, this agency has seen many challenges. But it serves a very important role for Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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Cc: [Ruarri Day-Stirrat](#), State Geologist and Agency Director