



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-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 3, 2021

To: [Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources](#)
Sen. Kathleen Taylor and Rep. Jeff Reardon, Co-Chairs
Members of the Subcommittee

Re: **SB 5515** – Oregon Department of Energy Budget – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has strong positions on Climate Change, including active support of renewable energy and energy efficiency as cost effective strategies to mitigate carbon emissions. The League also has positions on hazardous waste and on nuclear energy. **We first studied the issue of energy in 1972.** More recently, we addressed ocean energy in our [Coastal study](#). All of these positions come into play as we address the budget for the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE).

We support on-going funding for the Hanford Cleanup Board, Nuclear Safety, Emergency Preparedness, Radioactive Materials and funding for the Energy Facility Siting Council work. League members are engaged in many of these issues.

Specifically, we encourage adequate support for the small, but critical Nuclear Safety and Emergency Preparedness Division. Composed of only six staff, since September 2019, they have taken on the unexpected additional workload of investigating and responding to discovery of the illegal dumping at the Arlington landfill of 2.5 million pounds of radioactive waste from out-of-state fracking operations. This has included issuance and follow-through on a Notice of Violation—the first of its kind for activity of this kind—but also the development and implementation of a strategy to prevent reoccurrence and allow more appropriate response than is possible under current statute and regulations. The LWVOR has been pleased to be represented on the Regulatory Advisory Committee whose work on revisions to OAR 345-029 was just adopted by the Energy Facility Siting Committee this month. We have been greatly impressed with the knowledge, competence, and sensitivity to public concerns and input throughout the process. And their work is not done yet. **The next step in upgrading Oregon’s protection from this dangerous, illegal waste is passage of [SB 246, Radioactive Waste Disposal Definitions and Enforcement](#), which has recently been moved to the Senate floor with a Do Pass recommendation.** The League fully supports this bill. Following passage, its regulatory implementation at OAR 345-050 will be challenging and complex but will constitute the next important step. **We understand fully the revenue constraints the Legislature faces at this time, but we urge that all due care be taken when considering the details of the ODOE budget to ensure that this important, long-overdue work is able to be done in the careful manner it will require.**

It is with this background that **we support POP 301 in the agency’s request budget for \$80,092 GF** to provide the equivalent of 0.15 FTE of staff time that has been dedicated to monitoring and enforcing compliance with statutory and administrative rules around disposal of radioactive material in Oregon—currently being paid for with Energy Supplier Assessment funds. New rules have just been adopted and we look forward to the passage of SB 246 with its currently indeterminate [fiscal](#) and additional rulemaking.

We also support POP 401 that the Governor has now included in her budget (\$488,630 Other Funds) to maintain two limited duration positions to meet increased workload associated with the review of applications—positions first approved in 2019—in the **Energy Siting program**. As we encourage changes to our energy sources, we can only hope that applications continue to increase but they will need to be fairly analyzed to meet all of Oregon’s many goals.

We note that Slide 46 of the agency presentation “removes Special Payment to DOGAMI” in this division. As LWVOR continues to look cross-agency, we wonder if this removal relates to the Governor’s proposal regarding DOGAMI and if this “Special Payment” needs to be added back to this budget in order to help pay for important DOGAMI staff.

Both of these POPs listed above are explained on page 3 of the Legislative Fiscal Office [Budget Review](#).

Additionally, we support ODOE’s engagement in DLCD’s Climate Friendly Communities project and others related to addressing climate issues. As this work focuses on the eight metropolitan planning organizations around the state and the jurisdictions within those entities, ODOE’s role in helping these communities locate places for EV infrastructure, for instance, will be important.

The League also supports at least one staffer for the Oregon Global Warming Commission (per the [OGWC 2020 Report](#) recommendations to the Legislature: #5 **“Increase funding for the Oregon Global Warming Commission to expand staff and analytic capacity.”**) Currently their budget includes part of a position within the Planning and Innovation Division according to notes from their July meeting. We see listed at least four ODOE staff presenting at the OGWC’s March 5 meeting. **As more is being asked of this important volunteer group, including two tasks under the Governor’s Executive Order 20-04, Oregonians should help pay for staffing and contract work needed to address their 2020 Report.** Among OGWC’s work assignments: Coordinating with the Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Forestry and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board focused on state goals for carbon sequestration and storage by Oregon’s natural and working landscapes. While a report on this assignment is due by the end of this biennium, implementation of the recommendations will fall on the 2021-23 biennium. As this session moves forward, we expect that this legislature will add tasks to this important Commission.

Lastly, we support the recommended changes in the agency’s Key Performance Measures (KPMs). Those KPMs are both a guide to the agency, but also a guide to the legislature to assure the agency has the fiscal ability to meet the goals set or explain how other sources of revenue will help them accomplish these KPMs.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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