



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 15, 2021

To: [Senator Jeff Golden](#), Chair
Senator Dallas Heard, Vice Chair
[Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery](#)

Re: **SB 248-1 – Omnibus Wildfire Policy Recommendations – Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports our statewide land use planning program with local implementation. We recognize the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) as the statewide planning agency, responsible for our 19 statewide land use goals. Included in those goals is Goal 7, Natural Hazards, which is often cited related to floods and tsunamis, but wildfire danger is yet another hazard acknowledged in this bill.

The League recognizes that we are already experiencing a climate emergency with extreme wildfires, severe drought, rising temperatures and the astronomical costs associated with present and future climate disasters. **The wildfire emergency must be addressed by clear and actionable state wildfire policy.** We support many of the proposed recommendations from the Governor's Wildfire Council and we believe that SB 248-1 includes many of those recommendations, while setting timelines for the implementation strategy proposed with this bill. We will supply comments in greater detail as the bill moves forward.

Our comments on SB 248 with the -1 amendment align with these principles:

- First, it gives the Public Utility Commission (PUC) the clear leadership to review and approve the wildfire risk mitigation plans that must be developed by investor-owned utilities and consumer-owned as well. Plans are due by 12/31/21. The lack of planning and coordination for determining when to shut off power and the on-going maintenance needed under powerlines were major factors in the devastating Labor Day fires.
- There is a clear need for Wildfire Risk Mapping, especially at the Wildland Urban Interface. The bill requires the Department of Forestry (ODF) to develop and maintain these maps in coordination with Oregon State University, the Dept. of Land Conservation and Development, other state agencies, the State Fire Marshal, local governments, tribal governments and other public bodies. Maps must be completed by 6/30/22. Separately, the State Fire Marshal is responsible for establishing and will provide financial, administrative, technical or other assistance to a local government for enforcing minimum defensible space.
- The Department of Land Conservation and Development will update the statewide land use planning program rules for Natural Hazards to provide local governments with guidance for amending their local land use codes to incorporate wildfire risk maps. The Department of Consumer and Business Services is responsible for setting the building code standards for new construction/home hardening of homes in the high-risk areas.
- Delegates the responsibility of wildfire smoke to the Environmental Quality Commission and Oregon Health Authority to develop a response program.

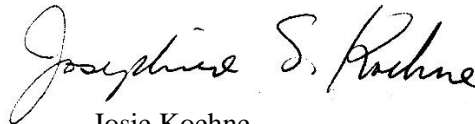
- ODF is to design a plan to reduce wildfire danger on public or private forestlands and rangelands by reducing of hazardous fuel levels. We believe this must be designed to carefully to match the local conditions and forest types, and done with care to protect soils and water supplies and includes prescribed burning, commercial and noncommercial harvesting where appropriate. There is a difference between the needs in Western Oregon vs. Eastern Oregon related to understory management.
- Oregon wildfire plan goals are to achieve 1) ecological goals, 2) reduce fuel loads and 3) reduce wildfire suppression costs.
- By January 1, 2023, ODF must develop rules to ensure efficient and effective shared funding proposals for wildfire response based on recommendations of the Governor's Forestry Financial Oversight Team and by Jan.1, 2026, coordinate with the State Fire Marshal, state agencies and local governments, to establish baseline levels of wildfire protection.
- The bill provides appropriations to the various agencies with a role for the programs and activities outlined in the bill.

LWVOR is supportive of the strategy and elements of this bill because it clearly defines roles, responsibilities and dates to meet its clear goals for an on-going statewide plan to address one of the major effects of our changing climate in Oregon. The work will need to continue into the future as undergrowth will continue to need to be addressed, Oregon's population will continue to grow and there will be pressure on our important forestlands.

We ask that the committee adopt the -1 amendment and move this bill forward. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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Cc: Jason Miner, Governor's Natural Resources Policy Director (Jason.Miner@oregon.gov)
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