



*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 17, 2021

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

Re: **SB 335-3** – Appointment of State Forester, Board of Forestry Appointments and Public Participation – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has set its top priorities for the 2021 legislative session. Among them is this statement: “*address the climate emergency by supporting Governor Kate Brown’s 2018-2020 Carbon/Climate Executive Orders, (EO 20-04) requiring net zero greenhouse emissions before 2050 while ensuring environmental justice with a just transition for workers and impacted communities.*” 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 climate emergency must be addressed by strong and immediate changes in state forestry policy.** We support climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best available climate science that will ensure a stable climate for future generations.

The League of Women Voters of Oregon bases its testimony on studies of issues that are provided to our members who then develop positions that are adopted for use in advocating on said issues. **Our comments today on SB 335 with the -3 amendment are more observations than conclusions or recommendations, except that we can view the bill with the lens of our climate priority and with our position on public participation.**

The Oregon Dept. of Forestry has come under much pressure from all sides—in part due to the increasing costs of wildfires all over Oregon, conflicting positions on forest management and about ODF’s goals in implementing the Governor’s Executive Orders in addressing climate change. The agency has had two priorities in the past: fight fires on Oregon’s forestlands and promote the forest/timber industry. But since the 2010 forest management plan, its **current Mission is “To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon’s forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.”**

If the agency is to succeed in its multiple Mission goals, and its published **Vision** (below):

- *Healthy forests providing a sustainable flow of environmental, economic, and social outputs and benefits.*
- *Public and private landowners willingly making investments to create healthy forests.*
- *Statewide forest resource policies that are coordinated among Oregon’s natural resource agencies.*
- *ODF recognized as an agency operating openly and in the public interest.*
- *Oregon achieves a sustainable fire-protection system, fire-resilient forests and fire-adapted communities that reduce the negative impacts of wildfires to all Oregonians.*
- *Citizens who understand, accept, and support sustainable forestry and who make informed decisions that contribute to achievement of the Board of Forestry’s vision for forestry in Oregon.*

- *ODF is recognized as an employer of choice that encourages and values employees, provides a safe working environment, and allows employees to reach their full potential in providing excellent public service.*

then it is reasonable to consider SB 335-3 as changes needed to complete the Mission and accomplish the Vision.

While the League has no position on the current State Forester (and we have worked well with him these past years), we note that Oregonians chose to eliminate our State Superintendent of Schools so that the Governor would be clearly responsible for education in Oregon. We currently have a mixture of agency Boards appointing Directors and the Governor appointing. (For instance, the Governor recently appointed the new Director of Business Oregon.) **We encourage the legislature to have a discussion as to the need for the Governor to have clear responsibility and accountability for the state's forest agency.**

As to Board of Forestry appointments, again the League has no clear position. However, we go back to the agency's Mission and Vision. **Until there is a better balance of interests among the board members to protect, manage, and promote stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability, it does not seem reasonable to assume that mission can be met.**

**Lastly, the League believes the current advisory committee structure is weighted primarily on one part of the Board's Mission and vision, its economic duties.** At the last Board of Forestry meeting on March 3 the [agenda](#) clearly stated that *"There will not be an opportunity for the public to provide live oral testimony, but written testimony may be submitted for information items, before and up to three weeks after the meeting day."* Yet the ONE group that was provided specific public comment time was the Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee because it was "a statutorily established committee that advises the Board on State Forests policy." The League has clear positions on public involvement, and one can clearly argue that narrowing that involvement to one group on the agenda, whose interests do not meet the complete mission of the agency, makes it easy for us to **support some amendments or a deletion of that section of state law that weighs more heavily on one set of interests more than others.**

The League recognizes our forest industry as one important part of Oregon's economy. We are consistent in advocating for and protecting Goal 4 in our statewide land use planning system. But we also recognize the role of our forests in addressing climate change, and if we do not act soon, our timber industry will surely be adversely impacted. Planning to protect our precious drinking water for both quantity and quality affected by rising global warming temperatures, and water for other of nature's creatures is equally important. Our forests have a vital role to play in reducing carbon emissions.

**We appreciate Senator Golden's leadership in bringing this important bill forward and hope that, in spite of the timing of this hearing so close to a legislative deadline, the members will have thorough and thoughtful discussions around this important issue.**

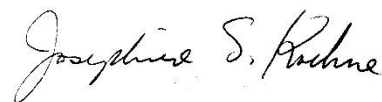
Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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