



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.

April 22, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Labor and Business  
Sen. Chuck Riley, Chair  
Sen. Bill Hansell, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Subcommittee

Re: **HB 2218A** – Directs Business Oregon to study wetlands – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that water is a resource that should be managed for the benefit of the public and as sustainable habitat for all life forms. The League believes that the interdependence of land use planning and water planning must be recognized and required at all levels of government.

From the League of Women Voters of Oregon water study “Water in Oregon—Not a Drop to Waste:

Wetlands are considered “waters of the state” and are defined by soils, vegetation, and hydrology. Oregon, like the federal government, is committed to a goal of “no-net-loss” of wetlands. Mitigation is required if wetland loss is deemed unavoidable.

League members have been engaged in wetlands issues and in the state’s removal/fill program since its inception. In 1987 we worked on and supported a bill for a pilot project to establish wetland mitigation banks to be overseen by State Lands. Members have served on a Technical Advisory Committee for the Dept. of State Lands removal/fill program and participated in the 2010 “assumption” discussion and again in 2020. Wetlands help clean water and provide some protection from flooding.

In 2019, the League supported [HB 2438A](#), a bill that would have established a pilot program to help some Willamette Valley cities develop a mitigation bank or find other answers to addressing the clash between wetlands and development. **Although the bill passed out of committee, the bill did not make it out of Ways and Means. The investment in this bill may well have been returned by the ability of industrial land with wetlands challenges to become developable.** The fiscal impact statement said: *The legislation provides a blank General Fund appropriation to the Department of Administrative Services for distribution to the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments to be used to hire employees to solicit bids and to contract for mitigation needs and the development of a local public wetland mitigation bank.*

Although we are cautious related to this bill requiring Business Oregon to “study the impact of laws related to wetlands on economic development”, as noted above, we believe this particular issue in the Willamette Valley needs discussion. We would hope that any such study not neglect the very real value of wetlands, including the less expensive way they clean water and how wetlands are now being used by jurisdictions as they work to meet clean water goals in our rivers and streams.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone  
LWVOR President

Peggy Lynch  
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator

Cc: Rep. Marty Wilde, Chief Sponsor