



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.

March 14, 2023

To: Chair, Senator Kathleen Taylor
[Senate Committee on Labor and Business](#)

Re: [SB 907](#) – Right to Refuse Dangerous Work – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports the right for employees to refuse to perform tasks assigned by employers under circumstances that would result in serious injury or impairment to the health and safety of the employee or other employees. We stand on the fundamental position of the League of Women Voters (LWV): “Promote social and economic justice, and the health and safety of all Americans.”

This bill represents an important adaptation to climate change which exposes outside workers to increasingly dangerous situations such as extreme heat and wildfire smoke. The LWV “supports actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change in order to protect our state from the negative physical, social, economic, and public health effects.”¹

The League of Women Voters is particularly concerned with the working conditions of agricultural workers who continue to work outside despite worsening air quality and hotter conditions, causing asthma and heat stroke. A study conducted in 2022 in Merced County with 1200 farmworkers, showed that 13% had to keep working when smoke made it difficult to breathe, with one-third reporting no access to respirators.² In these cases, agricultural workers need to have the right to refuse to work in unsafe conditions. The League of Women Voters stands for equal rights to care for health and safety.

SB 907 calls for nothing less than environmental justice. Agricultural workers, often undocumented and left out of many laws on labor standards, work in a precarious situation. They gravely need the right to refuse a task that endangers their health without disciplinary action and retaliation. Living at poverty level or below, such action requires the right to use sick leave, if they have it. The Merced County study finds that over a third of agricultural workers were unwilling to file a complaint if employers were out of compliance with labor laws because of fear of retaliation.

In conclusion, The League of Women Voters of Oregon strongly supports the passage of this bill as a necessary adaptation to the conditions of work in the era of climate change and as an act of environmental justice to protect outside workers, particularly agricultural workers whose voice is weak because they are lowly paid and not well protected by labor laws.

Please vote to SB 907 go forward for a full hearing of the Senate.

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Climate Emergency Coordinate

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¹ California League of Women Voters Position <https://lwvc.org/our-work/positions>

² University of California, Merced and Community and Labor Center of Merced County 2022 Farmworker Health in California: Health in a Time, Contagion, Drought, and Climate Change.