



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.

April 27, 2023

To: **Co-Chairs Sen. Frederick and Rep. McLain and Members of the Committee**
[Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education](#)

Re **[HB 5025](#) – Higher Education Coordinating Commission**
Portland State University
Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions Programs – SUPPORT

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has extensive positions on public involvement/engagement and has benefited from the work of Portland State University’s Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions Programs for many years. **The programs bring disparate groups together to seek solutions to serious issues affecting Oregonians.**

Most recently, we have followed the work of Oregon Consensus as they have helped others find a solution for the now Elliott State Research Forest that keeps the forest in public hands. Their skills have brought timber advocates, conservation advocates, local community voices, state agencies and others together. That work has led to the creation of a new public Authority with its own Board to govern the forest. But the work is not done. It will be at least 2024 when the new Authority will take over and Oregon Consensus may still be needed to help as the Dept. of State Lands completes the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan and fiscal issues are addressed.

The League was also engaged during the year-long HB 5006 Water [Work Group](#) conversations in 2022 where a large group of water interests met together to find common ground on regional water planning. That effort culminated in a [report](#) and introduction of [HB 3163](#), a bill that will continue Place-Based Planning with funding and new, more clear criteria for that formerly pilot program. Many of the items in [HB 3124](#), the Water Scarcity and Drought Package, were discussed during this effort and you can see support for items in that bill from many of the Work Group members.

We could give additional examples of Oregon Consensus’ and Oregon Solutions’ work, but we suspect the committee may well have seen their work and outcomes. **Having talented, skilled facilitators that hear the views of all parties to a dispute and work to find common ground is worth funding.**

Because the cost of this work is mostly in staffing, any cuts would reduce the ability of these programs to help Oregonians reach agreement. It is our understanding that this group provided assistance for 127 projects during the 2021-23 biennium.

We support full funding for these programs and urge your support as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Rebecca Gladstone
President LWVOR

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Natural Resources Coordinator