



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.

February 7, 2024

To: Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Committee Members
[Senate Judiciary Committee](#)

Re: [SB 1503 -3](#) – Community Safety and Firearm Suicide Prevention TF – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports the amended version of SB 1503, which establishes a Task Force on Community Safety and Firearm Suicide Prevention. The goals of the Task Force are fully in keeping with the League’s long-standing positions on Gun Policy, Violence Prevention, and Behavioral Health. **The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens.** We firmly believe it is the role of government and social institutions to take an active role in firearm suicide prevention, and we are thankful that the bipartisan sponsors of the bill have acknowledged the critical nature of the issue and the importance of implementing research-based solutions.

It is well documented that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant increase in behavioral health issues across the country, including suicide ideation, particularly among young people. Oregon has had historically high rates of firearm suicides compared to other states, but what we are experiencing today is truly alarming. Our state’s firearm suicide rate is 42%t higher than the national average. We must do better, and SB 1503 is a positive step forward. In its favor is the support it has garnered from numerous nonprofits, medical and behavioral health organizations, mental health professionals who work directly with those experiencing suicidal ideation, and the OHSU Gun Violence Prevention Research Center.

The League supports positioning the Task Force within the Department of Justice in coordination with the Oregon Health Authority and federally-recognized Native American tribes. We also support the care taken to include a broad range of stakeholders on the Task Force, the allocation of \$400,000 for third-party research, and the focus of resources on specific geographic areas, professions, and age groups that are most at risk of firearm suicide. Lastly, we are encouraged that the Task Force will be looking at ways to enhance the use of extreme risk protective orders, a valuable tool that we feel has been greatly underutilized across the state.

We urge you to vote yes on SB 1503. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca L. Gladstone".

Rebecca Gladstone
Co-President LWVOR

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marge Easley".

Marge Easley
Gun Safety Portfolio