



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 6, 2025

To: [Sen. Lew Frederick](#) and [Rep. Emerson Levy](#), Co-Chairs

Members of the [Joint Committee](#) on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Re: [HB 5010](#) – Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) Budget –

SUPPORT with Comments

It is important to recognize the Vision of DOGAMI: ***“DOGAMI envisions an Oregon where people and places are prepared for natural hazards; where decisions for Oregon’s future always consider natural hazards; where resource potential is fully understood and responsibly developed with our current and future needs in mind; where earth science contributes to the health of our coast, rivers, forests, and other ecosystems; and where geologic learning and discovery abound.”***

The League of Women Voters has followed the work of this agency in recognition of the importance of geologic science and in protection of public safety. We have a comprehensive position adopted in 1995 on Hazards, a part of which is: *The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that all levels of government share the responsibility of coordinating, implementing and funding an effective program to mitigate Oregon's earthquake and tsunami hazards. Priority must be given to mitigation that protects human life and safeguards critical life support systems. When siting critical facilities, tsunami run up and inundation as well as seismic factors such as severe ground shaking, liquefaction, massive landslide potential, and subsidence should be considered. Geological reports identifying property at risk should be on file and accessible to the public. Property that poses extreme hazards should be designated as unbuildable.*

We also have strong positions in support of our land use planning program of which Goal 7, Natural Hazards, is an important element. There are critical linkages among agencies’ duties regarding Oregonians’ public safety regarding this very important issue. As the Dept. of Forestry and Oregon State University have provided wildfire hazard mapping, **we wonder if there is a role for DOGAMI related to potential wind events due to geologic formations.**

We have studied Hard Rock Mining and adopted positions: *The League of Women Voters of Oregon recognizes society's need for key minerals, and also the potential harmful environmental, health, and human impacts that mining for these minerals can produce. Hard rock mining in Oregon is governed by a complex and interconnected set of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and permitting processes, which include provisions for environmental protection, economic evaluation, and reclamation of mining sites. The League supports an approach to the overall regulation and oversight of hard rock mining.*

The League supported a POP 101 in 2023 to implement the paperless permitting program. We are disappointed that the system is still not up and running, but know that completion of this program is essential to making this agency more efficient and improving customer approval. Because the system is so important, we can support yet another infusion of General Funds to complete this project in this year’s POP 101.

However, **we continue to support long-term a self-supporting program by fees to users of the system.** With that in mind, we also will support [SB 836](#) to assure the system, once active, can collect those fees.

POP 102 establishes three permanent positions (3.00 FTE) and provides \$10 million Other Funds (from Common School Fund) expenditure limitation to research geologic carbon sequestration feasibility on state lands. The intent is to build momentum towards shovel ready projects and leverage state dollars to match federal grant opportunities to support this climate change initiative. The concept as explained is exciting, but **we are concerned that the new federal administration will not help fund this project.** We know that Ways and Means will review the potential for federal assistance by the time this budget is ready to pass in order to assure that this investment has significant potential for a return to the Common School Fund. If you go forward with funding for this POP, we ask that you also support the position in the Dept. of Environmental Quality budget to assure the well drilling permitting is safe and doesn't affect the groundwater's quality.

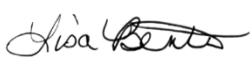
POP 103 includes a fee increase and associated increased revenues, establishes 12 permanent positions (12.00 FTE), and \$3.3 million Other Funds expenditure limitation to right size the MLRR program. The positions will provide increased capacity for timely and accurate customer service and increased site inspections for compliance. **The League supports a fee increase in order that the agency can reach the minimum mine inspection requirements under KPM #4 of 20%.** For years, LWVOR has pointed out the mismatch between the lack of success in meeting KPM #4 and the agency's addressing it. We hear the agency's plan to work toward meeting KPM #4 but believe that the permitting community should be responsible for these costs. As to the number of positions, that will depend on the final decision around a fee increase.

POP 104 establishes three permanent positions (3.00 FTE) and provides \$942,383 Other Funds expenditure limitation. The positions have previously been limited duration and support mining permits and compliance and are necessary to meet existing and anticipated workload. We understand that permanent positions can help provide for continuity and less loss of time in on-boarding of new employees. We fully expect that **the work on the proposed gold mine near Vale, Oregon, will continue for many years.**

LWVOR has long advocated for General Fund support for the Geological Survey & Services (GS&S) program because that division addresses public safety, including providing data on tsunami lines and landslide areas. And now is helping with groundwater data. We understand that DOGAMI's LIDAR information is open source—public information and available to all. For years this division had to rely **ONLY** on grant funding. We are pleased that the legislature has acknowledged their value to the state by providing some General Funds to GS&S. Fluctuating grant funding, the life blood of this division, continues to have an impact on personnel. But the Mineral Land Regulation and Reclamation (MLRR) program should continue to be fee-funded.

Lastly, we must take the opportunity to applaud the agency's new management and focus on financial reporting. For many of us, this agency has seen many challenges. But it serves a very important role for Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



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LWVOR President



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Cc: [Ruarrri Day-Stirrat](#), State Geologist and Agency Director