



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 18, 2025

To: [Sen. Jeff Golden](#), Chair, [Sen. Todd Nash](#), Vice Chair

Members of the [Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire](#)

Re: [SB 836](#) – Increases DOGAMI Fees for MLRR Permits – **SUPPORT**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has a comprehensive position adopted in 1995 on Hazards. We also support state land use Goal 7 and regulations that address the mining industry.

More recently, we [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 Department of Geology and Mineral Industries is a critical agency that provides important science related to a multitude of hazards in its Geological Survey & Services (GS&S) Division. The League supports General Funds to help support the GS&S Division.

The Mineral Land Regulation and Reclamation (MLRR) Division, funded totally by fees, regulates mining in Oregon. With the increase in metals mining interests and the need for aggregate for our transportation projects, the League believes that the fee increases requested by the agency this session—fees that will pay for additional needed staffing—are required to provide reasonable processing time for the permit applications and, importantly for the League, to increase inspectors to meet KPM #4 to inspect ONLY 20% of mines, a target that has not been met for years, with the 2024 actual inspections being 14%. Staffing is needed to provide these inspections to protect the public's interest.

We supported funding in 2023 to implement a 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. We support another infusion of General Funds to complete this project. That's the public's investment. But the industry needs to step up. We continue to support long-term a self-supporting program by fees to users of the system. With that in mind, we support SB 836 to assure the system, once active, can collect those fees.

The positions to be funded by this increase in fees will right size the MLRR program. The positions will provide increased capacity for timely and accurate customer service and increased site inspections for compliance.

We note Section 5 of SB 836 related to consolidated permitting projects. The League has followed the Grassy Mountain (Calico Resources) gold mine project out of Vale since its inception, in part because we are intrigued by the concept of consolidating the needed permits in one process. But the funding to support this process needs an increase in fees.

The League recognizes that these are significant increases in fees for the mining community. And that some of those fees will be passed on as costs to the general public for the products mined. But this Division needs to have enough staff to provide timely processing for the regulated community and for the good of the general public.

With these considerations, **the League urges your support for SB 836.**

Thank you for considering our testimony.



Lisa Bentson
President LWVOR



Peggy Lynch
Natural Resources Coordinator

Cc: DOGAMI Director [Ruarri.DAY-STIRRAT](#)