



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 100-year-old 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.*

June 21, 2021

To: Oregon House of Representatives

Re: **SB 16 – Drought in Oregon – Removing farmland – PLEASE VOTE NO**

SB 16 would waive Oregon’s land use laws to allow 100 homes somewhere among 55,000 acres of farmland outside of the City of Ontario. Not only is this contrary to sound farm land protection policies and will divert infrastructure investment away from local cities like Ontario, but it will exacerbate the already severe water shortages in Eastern Oregon.

- Oregon is in a severe drought. These homes would be allowed to have water wells that will draw from groundwater that we don’t even know exists. The limited water in farmland should go to the vital agricultural industry—critical to Malheur County’s and the state’s economy.
- In this session, Oregon taxpayers are already being asked to help domestic well owners in Harney County that are experiencing diminishing groundwater—to the tune of \$500,000. Will SB 16 set Oregon up for that same need in a few years for these Malheur County homes?
- Oregon is investing in a transload facility to support the agricultural industry in this area. It will be important to continue to support that industry to assure the facility is successful.

We do not need to set up yet another conflict over water between those who produce our food and housing development, especially when there is plenty of land inside the Ontario Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) for housing development. In recent years, Ontario has expanded its Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to bring in about 600 acres from its urban reserve, leaving about 1500 acres still available in the Ontario Urban Reserve, in addition to vacant residential lands already in the Ontario UGB. Ontario needs investment in infrastructure inside its UGB to support economic development. We encourage your support for the city and reject this proposal.

Thank you for considering our request. **We ask that you VOTE NO on SB 16.**

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

Rebecca Gladstone  
LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Lynch".

Peggy Lynch  
LWVOR Natural Resources Coordinator