



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEBRASKA

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December 15, 2015

Nebraska Legislature

Re: Testimony Re: LR 154 and LR 257

Senator Haar and Senator Stinner,

The League of Women Voters has a long history of conducting research, examining issues from various perspectives, and reaching positions based on consensus. Advocacy, based on these positions, is an important part of League activity. Since 2010, the League has sought to reduce the environmental impact of mining processes that contaminate and pollute. The League of Women Voters believes that hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking”, a process by which high pressure water, sand and chemicals are pumped underground to fracture geologic formations in order to release natural gas, poses a threat to water and other natural resources.

With respect to the make-up of production fluid from fracking, the League supports inspection and monitoring of the fluid throughout the process, from its return to the earth’s surface to transportation to disposal wells to storage in the wells. The League also supports full disclosure of pollution data, as we are concerned about how disposal wells are monitored because the contents of production fluid are unknown. Also, there is concern about future liability issues, because often oil and gas company liability issues are paid for by taxpayers and not the fuel companies.

The League supports locating disposal facilities in areas posing least public risk and so encourage wastewater to be housed near the site of use, instead of exposing the public and roads to disposal truck traffic.

Currently in Nebraska, the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has been charged with both promoting and regulating the oil and gas industry. There is clear conflict of interest in this dual role which does not ensure that they protect the land and water of Nebraska with regards to fracking wastewater storage. The Commission, further, has claimed its rules barred testimony of citizens during consideration of a wastewater injection well. They also ignored requests from Senators and the public to wait for scientific studies and legislative review before approving wastewater disposal in Sioux County.

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska believes that the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has not been open and transparent in their response to management of fracking wastewater storage and that the regulatory duties of said Commission could be better conducted by the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Natural Resources, the Public Service Commission, Natural Resource Districts, Counties or other appropriate agencies or elected entities.

As hydraulic fracturing has expanded throughout our country, communities have been forced to make decisions without access to reliable information about the potential risks to health, safety and the environment. It is befitting that our Legislature and other duly elected officials make laws and establish safeguards to protect our land, water and public health from the possible contamination and pollution resulting from wastewater spills and leakage. The Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has shown that it is not the agency best suited to that role.

Sherry Miller, President

League of Women Voters of Nebraska

Janece Mollhoff, Natural Resources Director

League of Women Voters of Nebraska