League of Women Voters Texas Testimony

Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact Commission January 6, 2015

I am Susybelle Gosslee speaking on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas.

The League's pioneering focus on the interrelationships among air and water management issues forms the basis of efforts to ensure that government decision-making recognizes that environmental protection must be a seamless web. The evolution continues as the League's efforts go beyond fighting for pollution control and waste management strategies to demanding pollution prevention and waste reduction.

The League supports having this commission follow good government principles with transparency, accountability, positive community impact and preservation of the common good.

The League's Position

The League supports the preservation of the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment. The League's approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem solving. The interrelationships of air, water and land resources should be recognized in designing environmental safeguards. The League's environmental protection and anti-pollution goals aim to prevent ecological degradation and to reduce and control pollutants before they go down the sewer, up the chimney or into the landfill.

The League is concerned that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is underfunded and unstaffed so has limits on the quality of oversight that it should provide to ensure the safety of public health and the environment. Every effort should be made for this Commission, the TCEQ to do its due diligence with regard to oversight and enforcing regulations with the transportation and storage of low-level radioactive waste. Standards must be enforced in a timely, consistent and equitable manner for all violators in all parts of society, including governmental units, industry, business and individuals.

The League is concerned that efforts are being made to make Texas a high-level radioactive waste storage site. No other state in the country has asked for this dangerous material. The citizens want to have protection from high-level waste on the public roads and near their homes, schools, and work places. The people of Texas will be taking the risks, while a company, Waste Control Specialists, gains the profits. Risk versus reward for the public and the environment are too great to be stored in Texas. This waste remains dangerous for tens of thousands of years, much longer than recorded history, let along the life of a single corporation. The people of Texas will have to bear the risks in the long-term while the company profits in the short-term. It

is not a fair bargain. Moreover, unnecessary transportation of this material, with its terrorism risks, should be avoided.

Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service. When long term storage costs are included in the analysis, Texas cannot afford to take the risk. Consumers, taxpayers and ratepayers must expect to pay some of the costs, but not pay for thousands of years to store high level radioactive waste. The League supports policies that accelerate pollution control, including federal financial assistance for state and local programs.

The League supports:

regulation of pollution sources by control and penalties;

inspection and monitoring;

full disclosure of pollution data;

incentives to accelerate pollution control;

vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for states and localities that do not comply with federal standards and substantial fines for noncompliance.