



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

## TESTIMONY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS SENATE AGRICULTURE, WATER, AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 1796

MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2017

I am JENSIE MADDEN, testifying as a member and on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas IN SUPPORT OF SB 1796. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

League positions are derived through a lengthy and thoughtful process involving the participation of 25 local Leagues representing more than 5,000 members and supporters throughout the state of Texas.

Our members have agreed that:

*The League of Women Voters of Texas supports measures for the protection, conservation, and development of the groundwater resources of the state. We support groundwater management that would maintain groundwater quality by preventing harmful contamination of aquifers.*

Therefore, we are supporting SB 1796.

It is not news that Texas is growing and that additional population puts demands on our water supply. This bill, however, is about a new problem – what to do with the wastewater from our increasing population? Specifically, HB 3036 addresses the issue of growth over one of our state's most fragile water supplies, the Edwards Aquifer.

Members of the League have been studying the impacts of growth in Texas for many years. We believe that public policy should be directed at finding ways to minimize the environmental degradation that could occur if growth is not managed appropriately.

The most recent figures from the U.S. Census listing the ten fastest growing counties in the U.S. include three in the Texas Hill Country: Kendall County, Hays County, and my home, Comal County. All are situated on the Edwards Aquifer contributing zone.

This rapidly increasing growth is creating demand for residential subdivisions in previously undeveloped areas over the aquifer. To use Comal County as an example, our county engineer has described that, increasingly, these subdivisions are being built more densely. In years past, each property was one to five acres, having its own on-site septic system (OSSF). Now, more and more developers are building more densely and are applying for permits to build subdivision-wide sewer systems with their own water treatment plants.

This bill addresses what to do with the wastewater. You have heard about the problems with direct discharge over the aquifer. LWV believes that managing growth appropriately



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would be to require land application of the wastewater. Surface irrigation, evaporation, drain fields, or subsurface land application allow a natural filtration process through vegetation and percolating through large volumes of soil. Why take chances with the unknown cumulative effects of direct discharge when another method of dealing with wastewater is available?

Population trends are showing continued pressures in our Hill Country communities. Some estimates are that the Hill Country population of over 3 million in 2010 could double to over 6 million in 2050, if current rates of population growth continue. We can imagine that many of those people will find homes in new, denser subdivisions with centralized wastewater treatment.

LWV-TX believes that the wastewater from all those still-to-come treatment plants belongs in land application, not in the Edwards Aquifer.

Please vote favorably for SB 1796. Thank you.

**For additional information, please contact: Jensie Madden, Land Use Issue Chair, [J-DMadden@att.net](mailto:J-DMadden@att.net), 830-935-3360.**

The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) is a nonpartisan citizens' organization that has fought since 1919 to improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. It represents more than 5000 members and supporters throughout Texas.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties. The member-driven organization of women and men encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and seeks to influence public policy through education and advocacy of positions based on extensive issue study and consensus.