



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND, INC.

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

HB 1112 ENVIRONMENT - GAS STORAGE WELLS AND FACILITIES - SAFETY REGULATIONS

POSITION: SUPPORT

BY: LWVMD CO-CHAIRS BARBARA SCHNACKENBERG AND NANCY SORENG

DATE: MARCH 2, 2016

The League of Women Voters believes that public policy should promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest. Pollution of natural resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

We support this bill because currently Maryland does not require a risk management plan for inspection of gas storage wells or their machinery. There is only one facility in Maryland that would be covered by this bill, the Accident Dome gas storage facility in Accident, Maryland.

We are concerned about the need for safety regulations for facilities like this because a similar facility, Aliso Canyon in Porter Ranch, California suffered a massive methane leak last year which was only recently capped. It reportedly was an attractive facility but drilled in 1953 and was aging. It had not been inspected since 1976.

The Accident Maryland wells were producing gas wells up to the 1960's, and were converted to a gas storage facility by 1966. Although the Accident Maryland facility is covered by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) rules, we believe that Maryland should also require safety standards. Although the Porter Ranch Facility was not covered by FERC rules, we do not know that they would have prevented the disaster there.

The law would require those holding the gas well permit to have a comprehensive risk management plan, test safety values, gas pressure and more, and use infrared imaging to detect gas leaks. We think such minimal standards are reasonable to further protect Maryland.

We urge a favorable vote on HB 1112.