



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114 · Tel: 617-523-2999 · Fax: 617-248-0881

Email: lwvma@lwvma.org · Website: www.lwvma.org

Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
In support of H.805
An Act to mitigate water resource impacts

By Susan W. Abbott, LWVMA Water Specialist
January 7, 2014

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has long been an advocate for safeguarding water quality and the development and expansion of water conservation systems. We now urge Massachusetts Legislators to pass H.805 so that cities and towns can begin, or continue, to plan ways to mitigate the dangers to their water resources.

There is an urgent need for this bill. We have been slow to become aware of our diminishing supply of all fresh water sources. Our water issues emerge out of the persistent careless use of water in our cities and towns; our ever-growing population; and our continuing habit of building on porous land, creating fewer and fewer places for the infiltration of water. It is as if we had, knowingly and cleverly, planned a systematic depletion of our fresh water resources.

Passage of H.805 would provide all Massachusetts cities and towns with the right to establish a fund dedicated to investing in methods to retain and replenish water resources within their boundaries.

Examples of systems to retain and replenish water (see others noted in the bill):

1. plant trees to stop erosion
2. build cisterns
3. offer residential water barrels
4. teach residents to plant drought-resistant gardens
5. incentivize increasing setbacks for new buildings

Giving the right to municipalities to create a fund now would make several things possible:

1. A municipality could quickly create its own plan to save or replace water as well as to collect funds as soon as possible.
2. Instead of the state mandating a hike to all water bills, each municipality can decide what a “reasonable fee” would be to pay into the fund for its project. (A municipal fee would be on a continuum from the first gallon of water used through to the tenth gallon - but no higher.)
3. H.805 would avoid an outcry from communities which have felt held back from initiating useful water management plans for lack of incentives.

Without passage of this bill, a municipality will have to write a singular appeal to the legislature for permission to create a fund to pay for any locally-designed system to retain or replenish its water supplies and also have to lobby for passage of its legislation to create its fund.

Water resource management is one of the great challenges of the 21st century. It is essential that we and future generations have access to good quality fresh water in Massachusetts. Let our state show the way to water progress.