



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and
Agriculture**

**In Support of H.2139 – An Act to improve water quality and pollution control programs
By Carolyn Lee, LWVMA Specialist on Water Resources
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports H.2139, sponsored by Rep. David Rogers. This legislation mandates that a detailed report of the gaps and problems in Massachusetts' current water quality and pollution control programs should be done. Such a report would include recommendations on what is required for the state to meet the goals of the Federal Clean Water Act over a reasonable period of time. It would include information on the budgetary and human resources required to meet those goals. The bill anticipates that the outcome of the report would be legislation proposed in the next session.

This bill was first filed in the last session in response to Governor Baker's proposal that the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection take over the management of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. We believe the MassDEP currently lacks the staff and funding to assume that burden, and there is no detailed description of the budgetary or human resource needs under the program, which this bill would provide.

H.2777, the Governor's bill to enable the MassDEP to take on the responsibilities of the EPA in this arena, doesn't provide specific funding, but, as filed, depends upon ongoing regular appropriations as part of the general budget.

Rep. Rogers' bill addresses this need by mandating the gap analysis to determine the extent of the problems and what it will cost to address the issues and provide management and monitoring on an ongoing basis. It is essential to know the problems and needs before even considering any move of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System from the EPA to MassDEP.

Since 1983, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has supported means to protect our critical water resources and to repair and rehabilitate water systems. That is exactly what this bill does. At the national level, the LWVUS has been a strong supporter of the Clean Water Act and its ongoing implementation.

Further, the LWVMA has long stood with many others in opposing unfunded mandates. Since the costs of assuming the program from EPA are currently unknown, the only way to prepare to fund a potential mandate is to know those costs.

The LWVMA supports this bill. Please support this legislation and its implementation prior to any decision on H.2777, so that an informed decision is made.

Thank you for your consideration.