

Protocols for Policy and Advocacy Actions by Oregon Women Lawyers

Introduction

To further its mission and purposes, Oregon Women Lawyers (“OWLS”) at times will issue position statements or engage in advocacy on issues of significant importance to its members. The following guidelines and procedures are intended to provide a framework for OWLS to consider proposals for position statements, letters to public officials, or other policy or advocacy actions.

OWLS Policy and Advocacy Guidelines

OWLS is a statewide organization with a diverse membership. In evaluating proposals for position statements or advocacy actions, OWLS primarily considers whether the proposal: (1) promotes the mission and principal purposes of OWLS; (2) involves an issue of significant importance to OWLS members; and (3) fits within OWLS’ guidelines for policy and advocacy actions. As general matter, OWLS limits position statements, letters to public officials, and other policy or advocacy actions to:

- Issues involving the practice of law or the legal profession, particularly issues relating to equal rights, opportunities, and inclusion of women and minorities within the legal profession and the justice system;
- Issues relating to the independence or integrity of the judiciary;
- Issues relating to equal access to legal services;
- Issues relating to equality and fair treatment of all people within the justice system.

OWLS does not endorse or oppose candidates for elected political or judicial positions.

OWLS also generally does not engage in legislative lobbying, including “grassroots” lobbying or requests for members to engage in legislative lobbying, except on issues directly affecting the legal profession and OWLS members.

Procedure for Requesting Policy or Advocacy Actions

Process for Submitting Requests:

- Any person or organization may submit a proposal for OWLS to issue a position statement or engage in advocacy on a particular issue.
- Any proposal for a position statement or advocacy must be submitted in writing to OWLS on the form titled “Oregon Women Lawyers Position Statement/Advocacy Action Request Form.”
- The proposal must, at minimum, identify:
 - The person or organization making the request;
 - The issue or position to be endorsed or advocated;
 - Any relevant deadlines or timing issues;
 - The reasons why the proposal would advance OWLS’ mission and/or principal purposes, and is consistent with these guidelines.
 - Provide a draft of the proposed position statement, letter, or resolution.
- As a general matter, all proposals must be submitted at least 10 business days in advance of any deadline. Requests for expedited consideration normally will be accepted only in time-sensitive matters.
- OWLS will not consider anonymous proposals, and all individuals and entities should have no expectation of confidentiality as to proposals.

Process for Evaluating Requests:

- The OWLS Board of Directors shall evaluate proposals according to these guidelines. The OWLS Board of Directors has sole discretion to accept or reject a proposal. A proposal will be accepted only if the majority of the voting board members votes in favor of the proposal.
- If a proposal is accepted, the OWLS Board of Directors has discretion to modify or revise any proposed draft of a position statement, letter, or other advocacy materials.

- The rejection of a proposal is not a reflection on the merits of a proposal. Proposals may be rejected for a number of reasons unrelated to the merits.
- Any Board member who believes that they may have a potential or actual conflict of interest with a proposal or an issue in a proposal, or who otherwise may not participate in the decision due to professional ethics constraints, shall promptly disclose the conflict or advise on the need for recusal.