



## SB 1599A — Why This Is More Than Moving an Election Date

More than 250,000 Oregonians signed Referendum Petition 2026-302, and those signatures were verified with the understanding that the measure would appear on the November general election ballot — the default timeline built into Oregon’s constitutional referendum system. SB 1599A proposes to move that vote to May, but doing so requires far more than a simple calendar change. **It reshapes core parts of Oregon’s initiative and referendum process.**

This bill changes the rules after the referendum has already been filed and verified, inserting the Legislature back into a process that is now supposed to be in the hands of Oregon voters.

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### The Constitutional Context

Oregon’s Constitution assumes that citizen-referred laws are decided at the general election unless the Legislature orders otherwise. That November timeline exists for a reason: it provides voters the longest period for public debate, independent analysis, and participation. When a qualified referendum is moved to a primary election, multiple statutory safeguards must be compressed or replaced to make the schedule work.

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### Key Changes Made by SB 1599A

#### 1. Legislative Control of the Explanatory Statement

Normally, a balanced citizen committee — including proponents and opponents — drafts the official explanatory statement voters read in the voters’ pamphlet. SB 1599A replaces that structure with a joint legislative committee.

**Result:** The same institution whose law is being referred would write the official explanation voters receive.

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#### 2. Financial Estimate Process Rewritten

Standard law requires a multi-agency process with hearings and review timelines to prepare the financial estimate. SB 1599A transfers that role to a legislative committee under compressed deadlines.

**Result:** Procedures designed for independent review are shortened to fit an accelerated election schedule.

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#### 3. Ballot Title Timelines Compressed

Ordinarily, ballot titles can be fully reviewed through the courts before appearing on the ballot. SB 1599A allows the Attorney General’s latest title to be used even if judicial review is unfinished.

**Result:** The election timeline takes priority over the normal judicial process.

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## 4. Voters' Pamphlet Participation Window Reduced

Oregon law usually provides a predictable filing window for citizens to submit arguments or gather signatures instead of paying filing fees.

SB 1599A replaces that statutory window with deadlines set by administrative rule – rules that are yet to be defined.

**Result:** The amount of time available for citizen participation will be radically shortened - or not existent at all.

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## 5. Additional Process Changes

The bill also shifts several election procedures — including impact statement timelines and public disclosure of arguments — away from fixed statutory rules and into accelerated administrative timelines.

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## Why This Matters

SB 1599A is not simply a scheduling decision. It restructures how information about a referendum is produced, who prepares that information, and how much time the public has to engage. Moving a measure already qualified for the November ballot to an earlier election requires overriding multiple statutory guardrails that were originally designed to protect neutrality, transparency, and broad public participation.

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## Bottom Line

The question raised by SB 1599A is larger than timing. Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians signed this referendum in record time because they wanted their voices heard through the normal November election process.

Regardless of where one stands on the policy itself, that level of civic participation reflects a clear desire for a full, transparent public debate. Moving the measure to an accelerated timeline — while simultaneously rewriting key referendum procedures — risks reinforcing a growing belief among voters that their role in the process is being narrowed rather than respected.

At a moment when public trust in institutions is fragile, decisions about election timing and referendum rules carry consequences far beyond a single vote; they shape whether Oregonians feel their participation still carries real weight in the democratic process.

I urge you to respect the referendum process and the will of the Oregon people.

I urge a NO vote on SB1599A