

Submitter: Ciatta Thompson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or
Topic: SB1599

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose SB 1599, a rushed and manipulative attempt by the majority party sponsors to subvert the will of over 250,000 Oregonians who signed petitions to refer the controversial 2025 transportation tax-and-fee hike (Chapter 1, Oregon Laws 2025, special session) to the voters on the November 2026 general election ballot.

This bill is election manipulation disguised as procedural convenience. Oregonians exercised their constitutional right under Article IV, Section 1 to place this unpopular gas tax, payroll tax, and vehicle fee increase on the high-turnout November ballot for a fair, full decision by the people. Forcing it to the lower-turnout May 19, 2026 primary instead is a deliberate voter suppression tactic. Primaries see far fewer participants—often dominated by partisan extremes—while November brings out independents, moderates, and everyday working families who will feel these burdensome taxes the most. This isn't about efficiency or cost savings; sponsors have openly admitted the political strategy: the tax package is so unpopular it has a better shot surviving a low-turnout primary than facing the full electorate.

Proponents hide behind "special election" language, but the real intent is clear: cheat the process after the referendum qualified for November. It's dishonest, unprecedented, and erodes public trust. The emergency declaration and breakneck timeline further limit public input, signature gathering for related efforts, and even Voters' Pamphlet arguments. Oregonians deserve time to engage fully—not a steamrolled scheme to silence them.

Keep Referendum 2026-302 on the November ballot where it belongs—where the maximum number of Oregonians can deliver their verdict on these burdensome taxes.

I urge the committee to reject SB 1599 immediately and preserve the integrity of the referendum process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Ciatta Thompson