

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

I am writing in the strongest possible terms to express my profound opposition to Senate Bill 1599 (SB 1599). This bill, if enacted, would move the public vote on a referendum petition (Referendum Petition 2026-302) from the November general election to the May 19, 2026 primary election, and in doing so would effectively destroy the legitimate effort of Oregon voters to have their voices heard in a November ballot — at a time when turnout is significantly higher and representative of the statewide electorate.

This proposed legislative maneuver is deeply troubling on multiple grounds:

1. It Subverts the Will of the People.

Oregonians from across the state have worked tirelessly to gather enough valid signatures to qualify this referendum for the ballot — a demonstrated expression of grassroots civic engagement. Moving the vote to May, rather than allowing citizens their rightful say in the November general election when participation is at its highest, undercuts the democratic will expressed through that petition process. A primary election typically draws a fraction of the turnout of a general election, meaning the decision will reflect only a narrow slice of the electorate rather than the broad consensus of the people.

2. It Is an Explicitly Political Tactic — Not Good Governance.

Sponsors of SB 1599 have openly acknowledged that the bill is political in nature — designed to avoid having this referendum decided at the November ballot because the majority fears the outcome there. Crafting legislation for the purpose of manipulating electoral timing for partisan advantage is an affront to democratic norms and betrays the public trust. Laws should be made for the public good, not for political expediency.

3. It Undermines the Integrity of the Referendum Process.

Oregon's initiative and referendum system exists so that citizens may check and

balance the power of the Legislature. Allowing the Legislature to alter the timing and structure of a voter-driven referendum after signatures have been verified — especially without ample public input — sets a dangerous precedent that could chill future citizen engagement and harm the state's longstanding tradition of direct democracy. This is not reform; it is a power grab.

4. It Weakens Voter Participation and Equity.

Primary elections are often dominated by the most politically engaged and partisan voters. General elections, by contrast, attract a broader cross-section of Oregonians. By shifting the referendum vote to May, SB 1599 would likely diminish participation and disenfranchise many voters, especially independents and those less attuned to the electoral calendar. Oregon's democracy is strongest when all voters — not just the most motivated few — have equal access to deciding the state's future.

Conclusion.

SB 1599 is not a neutral procedural bill. It is a politically motivated attempt to circumvent the will of the people, weaken the referendum process, and suppress broad voter participation. Keep it on the November general election ballot, or Oregonians will put the final coffin nail in any belief in a non-corrupt Oregon governance, which is already hanging by a thread. Oregon has spoken, **REMEMBER YOUR OATH. I SIGNED to add to the NOVEMBER ballot and that has succeeded, AS INTENDED. Do not alter that.**

Kim Evans