

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

Dear Oregon Legislators,

I am writing in strong opposition to SB 1599 and the attempt to rush a citizen-qualified referendum from the November 3, 2026 general election to the May primary.

More than 250,000 Oregonians exercised their constitutional right to referendum by signing petitions to refer parts of House Bill 3991 to the November ballot—the election specifically designed for broad public participation, higher turnout, and full voter engagement. That effort was deliberate, lawful, and entirely consistent with Oregon’s Constitution.

Fast-tracking this measure to the May election is not a neutral administrative change. It is a direct affront to the voters who did everything right.

SB 1599 is being moved at extraordinary speed—so fast that it effectively denies citizens the opportunity to submit arguments for the Voters’ Pamphlet, a core component of informed participation in Oregon elections. When citizens are given no meaningful time to prepare arguments, the promise of “direct democracy” becomes hollow.

The message this sends is deeply troubling:

That when voters successfully challenge legislation, the rules can be changed after the fact to minimize participation, compress timelines, and mute public input.

Oregonians did not sign those petitions so their voices could be rushed, sidelined, or procedurally boxed out. They signed so the issue could be debated in full daylight, during a high-turnout election, with time for voters to hear all sides and make an informed decision.

Moving this referendum to May:

- Reduces voter participation
- Eliminates meaningful access to the Voters’ Pamphlet
- Undercuts public trust in the legislative process
- And erodes confidence that citizen-led actions are respected when they succeed

This is not about policy preference—it is about process, fairness, and respect for the electorate.

I urge you to stop SB 1599 and allow the referendum to proceed on the November 2026 ballot as the people of Oregon intended. Anything less signals that citizen participation is only welcome when it is convenient.

Oregonians are paying attention. We expect our elected officials to uphold—not manipulate—the democratic process.