

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

Oppose SB 1599 – Protect Voters’ Right to a November Referendum

My name is Jesse Smith, and I am an Oregon voter. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to SB 1599.

Last fall, more than 250,000 Oregonians signed a lawful referendum petition to refer the transportation tax and fee increases adopted by the Legislature to the November 2026 general election. That effort followed the Oregon Constitution and existing election law exactly as intended: to allow the broadest possible participation by voters on a matter of significant public consequence.

SB 1599 would undermine that process by moving the referendum from the November general election—when voter turnout is highest—to a May election, when turnout is consistently and materially lower. Regardless of one’s position on the underlying transportation package, changing the election date after a successful referendum effort is an inappropriate interference with the people’s reserved power of referendum.

Oregon law and long-standing practice recognize that referenda on major public policy questions belong on the November ballot, where the largest and most representative share of voters participate. Altering the timing of a citizen-initiated referendum after signatures have been gathered erodes public trust and creates the appearance that the rules are being changed to influence the outcome.

This Legislature and the Governor have emphasized the importance of voter engagement and democratic participation. SB 1599 contradicts those stated values. The role of the Legislature should be to respect the referendum process—not to narrow the electorate after the people have lawfully exercised their constitutional rights.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote NO on SB 1599 and allow Oregon voters to decide this question in November 2026, as the law and democratic norms intend.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jesse Smith
Oregon Voter