

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

Dear Committee Members / Senators / Representatives,

I am writing as a concerned Oregon voter, resident, taxpayer to strongly oppose Senate Bill 1599, which would shift the referendum vote on the 2025 transportation funding law (Referendum Petition 2026-302) from the November 2026 general election to the May 19, 2026 primary.

Over 250,000 Oregonians signed petitions to refer this measure — involving significant gas tax increases, vehicle fee hikes, and other changes — explicitly expecting it to appear on the high-turnout November ballot. Moving it to the lower-turnout May primary undermines democracy by reducing voter participation and effectively hiding the issue from the majority of the voting population. May elections consistently see far fewer voters, which critics rightly view as an attempt to suppress opposition to an unpopular tax package.

This change is unprecedented, limits time for public arguments in the voters' pamphlet, and appears designed for political advantage rather than fairness. Oregon's referendum process exists to let the people's voice be heard broadly — not to be manipulated midstream by changing rules after signatures are gathered. I urge you to:

Oppose SB 1599 and keep the referendum on the November ballot as intended.
Reject any procedural moves that prioritize low-turnout elections over maximum public input.
Prioritize transparency and respect for the initiative/referendum system.

Thank you for considering this. Oregonians deserve their full voice on major tax and fee decisions. Please vote NO on SB 1599.

Sincerely,
Art Dickens
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