

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

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kyle Bunch, and I am a resident of Wilsonville, Oregon. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1599.

I volunteered more than 100 hours on the Gas Tax Referendum effort because I believe deeply in the integrity of Oregon's initiative and referendum process. Over 250,000 Oregonians signed their names to place this issue on the November general election ballot—not the May primary. Senate Bill 1599 disregards those voices and undermines the will of the voters.

Moving this referendum from the November general election to the May primary election effectively disenfranchises independent and non-affiliated voters, who make up a significant and growing portion of Oregon's electorate. These voters participate at far higher rates in general elections than in primaries. Shifting the vote to May ensures lower turnout and a less representative outcome on an issue of statewide importance.

This measure is important enough, impacting transportation funding and household costs, to be decided when the highest number of Oregonians are participating, not when turnout is predictably lower.

It is also impossible to ignore the context in which this bill is being advanced. After Governor Kotek delayed signing the original gas tax legislation as long as legally possible, narrowing the timeframe for referendum organizers, and after attempts to repeal the law failed, Senate Bill 1599 represents the latest effort to avoid letting voters decide this question in November.

The volume of opposition to this bill speaks for itself. Please review the written and in-person testimony already submitted. The resistance to SB 1599 is broad, bipartisan, and rooted in a fundamental belief that voters, not politicians, should decide the outcome of laws that directly affect them.

Respectfully, I urge you to stop this bill from moving forward. Listening to the hundreds of thousands of Oregonians who signed the referendum petition and who expect their voices to be heard in November will serve you far better than attempting to manipulate the process to advance a political agenda.

Oregonians are paying attention. And they will remember whether this Legislature chose to respect the will of the voters, or tried to work around it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Kyle Bunch
Wilsonville, Oregon