

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

I am writing as a resident of Grants Pass, Oregon, to strongly oppose Senate Bill 1599. This bill seeks to override established election procedures by moving the statewide vote on Referendum Petition 2026-302 to the May 19, 2026 primary election, rather than allowing it to proceed as required on the November 2026 general election ballot.

Referendum Petition 2026-302, qualified by over 250,000 Oregon voters' signatures, challenges significant tax and fee increases on transportation enacted in the 2025 special session. Oregon law defaults referendums like this to the next general election in November to ensure maximum voter participation and turnout. Shifting it to the May primary—historically a lower-turnout election—would disenfranchise thousands of voters, particularly working families, rural residents, and those less likely to participate in primaries.

This move appears designed to reduce opposition to the tax increases by limiting public exposure and turnout. Proponents have acknowledged strategic political advantages in doing so, but this undermines the people's right to a full and fair voice on taxation. The referendum process is a core democratic tool in Oregon, and altering the ballot date in this manner—especially under an emergency clause—sets a dangerous precedent for future citizen initiatives and referendums.

Furthermore, rushing this change limits time for signature verification challenges (if any remain), ballot title preparation, explanatory statements, voters' pamphlet arguments, and overall public education on the measure. It subverts the will of the 250,000+ signers who expected their petition to be heard by the broadest possible electorate.

I urge the Committee and the full Legislature to reject SB 1599. Keep Referendum Petition 2026-302 on the November 2026 ballot, where Oregonians can have the maximum opportunity to participate and decide on these tax increases.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I respectfully request that this statement be included in the official record.

Sincerely,
Steven Ackerman
Grants Pass, Oregon