

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

To: Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition
2026-302

From: Shawna Gaskey

Date: 2/ 26

Re: Strong Opposition to SB 1599 – Protecting the Will of the People

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my firm opposition to SB 1599, which seeks to move the statewide vote on the transportation tax referendum from the November 2026 general election to the May 2026 primary.

I speak not only as a concerned citizen but as someone who stood on the front lines of this democratic effort as a signature gatherer. During my time volunteering, I spoke with hundreds of Oregonians from all walks of life. The message I heard consistently was clear: people feel overtaxed and want the right to vote on these significant increases in a high-turnout, general election.

When these 250,000+ Oregonians signed the petition, they did so with the explicit understanding that the vote would occur in November 2026, as stated on the petition itself. By moving this date midstream, the legislature is effectively pulling a "bait-and-switch" on its own constituents.

My opposition is based on these direct observations from the field:

Widespread Frustration: Most people I spoke with were frustrated by the \$4.3 billion in new taxes (gas tax, registration fees, and payroll taxes) and specifically wanted the accountability that a general election provides.

Expectation of Fairness: Voters believe that major tax decisions should be decided when the most people are participating. Moving the vote to a May primary—where turnout is historically much lower—feels like a strategic attempt to bypass the broader electorate.

Erosion of Trust: People expressed a deep distrust of the legislative process. Passing SB 1599 would confirm their worst fears: that the government will change the rules whenever the people successfully use their constitutional right to a referendum.

I urge the committee to respect the intent of the quarter-million Oregonians who signed this petition in good faith. Please reject SB 1599 and keep the referendum on the November ballot where it belongs.

Sincerely,

Shawna Gaskey

Sweet Home/Linn County

541-367-2740