

February 7, 2026

From: Jim Mischel
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To: Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302

Co-Chair Senator Kayse Jama, Co-Chair Representative David Gomberg, Senator Khanh Pham, Senator Bruce Starr, Representative Willy Chotzen, Representative Lucetta Elmer

Opposition to SB 1599: Upholding the Will of Oregon Voters

Introduction

I am firmly against SB 1599 and I am upset that this legislation was even submitted. The Secretary of State designated November 2026 as the election date. Over 250,000 Oregonians signed petitions specifically supporting a November vote. Changing the established terms after so many citizens voiced their will disregards and disrespects those voters. The election should remain in November as originally stated on the petition. As the saying goes, "you reap what you sow," and those responsible for the misguided decisions in 2025 should accept the consequences.

It is clear—so obvious that even a child could recognize it—that the real issue here is not about finances or scheduling concerns until November. The real problem is the political optics: having a recall of a poorly conceived tax bill appear on the same ballot as Democratic candidates, especially in the governor's race, right alongside the Governor's controversial 'emergency' bill. This bill was rushed through a Special Session for a bill claimed to be an emergency, yet delayed for weeks on end so that ill Senators could return and vote.

Voter Commitment to the November Election

I urge you to vote NO on SB 1599. More than 250,000 people signed a petition for a November 2, 2026 election, as set by the State of Oregon via the Secretary of State—not May, not June or July, but NOVEMBER 02, 2026. This was clearly established with the Secretary's announcement and in writing on the petition sheets. The story should

end there, but now Democrats in the Oregon Legislature are attempting to move the election to May.

Concerns About Changing the Election Date

The Secretary of State established November 2 as the election date; the legislature took no action to move the date before the SOS issued the petition. The Oregon Constitution governs the election date the SOS must set, so everyone should have been aware before the petition was even drafted.

This change is obviously motivated by political interests rather than public service. When 250,000 Oregonians sign a petition promising a November 2026 vote, the government should honor that and not change the rules midstream. Moving the referendum to May by separate legislation is unprecedented and likely unconstitutional. It risks silencing public participation by denying citizens adequate time to submit arguments to the voters' pamphlet. Oregonians deserve a fair vote—not a manipulated calendar.

Democratic Response and Voter Disenfranchisement

Democrats ignored voters during the 2025 legislative session and again during the Special "Emergency Session" (which was not an actual emergency). Now, they continue to disregard public opinion. There may be legal consequences, as a judge could be asked to issue an injunction against this bill taking effect pending further court challenges. Independent voters, who are not affiliated with either major party, do not typically vote in primaries. Many may not realize they can participate, as they have been conditioned for years to believe they cannot vote in primaries. Democrats seem to be counting on this lack of participation.

Primary vs. General Election Turnout

Voter turnout is generally lower in primary elections compared to general elections. The Secretary of State issued petition signature sheets specifying NOVEMBER 2, 2026 in large print at the top. This clarity was intentional to ensure all signers knew the date they were supporting. With lower turnout and nonaffiliated voters not being used to or conditioned to voting in Primary elections, it would seem the Democrats are trying to manipulate the results.

Respect for the Will of the People

Would Democrats recognize that they were elected by the PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OREGON and that they work for THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OREGON?

OVER 250,000 PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OREGON DULY AND LEGALLY FILED A PETITION FOR A NOVEMBER 2026 ELECTION. The legislature is expected to uphold that date and commitment made to so many voters.

Ethical Concerns and the Transportation Bill

It is unethical and immoral to consider or pass this bill out of committee. The Governor requested the entire Transportation Bill, passed during the Special Session (which was one of the slowest emergencies in Oregon history), be repealed. Constitutional limits prevented that action. Democrats scrambled to find an alternative and are aware that placing the repeal initiative on the November ballot would most likely harm their candidates, especially the Governor race.

Instead, they move the vote to May to “allow more time for financial planning” but is obviously nothing more than political posturing in an obvious chance to increase the odds of the initiative failing. If May was the preferred date, Democratic Leadership could have instructed the Secretary of State to place it on the May ballot from the beginning.

Trust in Democratic Leadership

Democrats are demonstrating a lack of trustworthiness. It reminds me of when the voters defeated the bill for Corporate Activity Tax, the Democrat led Legislature returned and passed it anyway. Then there was the Illegal Alien Drivers Licenses. Passed over voter objection, repealed by Initiative Petition and then over ruled - passed again over voter objections by a Democrat led Legislature. Democrats are obviously and demonstrably running amok with no trust to be found.

Past statements from Burdick and Manning suggested or flat out stated Oregonians aren't smart enough to understand what's happening or know the issues. However, the people of Oregon may be a lot more informed than Democrats credit them for.

Conclusion

Vote NO on SB 1599, which plays tom foolery with independent – nonaffiliated voters and denies Oregonians the right to vote on the date they signed for.

In wrapping up, I reviewed the testimony submitted to OLIS and found 1,780 responses—a remarkable number for any bill that isn't related to firearms. Out of these, 1,758 oppose the bill, 3 are neutral, and only 19 are in support. This raises a critical question: Will you heed the voice of the overwhelming 98.8% who urge you to reject

this bill, or will you ignore us once more? November is approaching, and even those with short memories won't forget how you handle this issue.

Respectfully Submitted
Jim Mischel