

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

Subject: Strong Opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 1599 - Undermining Voter Rights and Democratic Process

Dear Oregon Legislators,

I am writing as a concerned Oregon resident to express my firm opposition to Senate Bill 1599 (SB 1599), which seeks to move the election date for Referendum Petition 2026-302 from the November general election to the May 19, 2026 primary election. This bill, introduced in the 2026 Regular Session, represents a blatant attempt to manipulate the electoral process for political gain, disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of Oregon voters and eroding public trust in our democratic institutions.

Referendum Petition 2026-302 successfully gathered over 250,000 signatures from Oregonians to challenge key provisions of the transportation funding bill passed in the 2025 special session, including new taxes and fees on gas and vehicles. These signatures reflect widespread public concern about the financial burden on working families, small businesses, and rural communities already struggling with rising costs. By shifting the vote to the primary election—where voter turnout is historically much lower (often less than half of general election levels)—SB 1599 deliberately reduces the number of voices heard on this critical issue. This is not about providing "clarity" on funding, as proponents claim; it is a strategic maneuver acknowledged by Democratic leadership to improve the bill's chances of survival by limiting participation to a smaller, potentially more favorable electorate.

Such tactics set a dangerous precedent. If lawmakers can arbitrarily change election dates for referendums that threaten their policies, what stops future legislatures from doing the same for other citizen-initiated measures? This bill undermines the spirit of Oregon's referendum process, which is designed to give the people a direct say in government actions. Moving the vote denies the full electorate—including independents, young voters, and those who engage more in general elections—the opportunity to weigh in on policies that directly impact their wallets and daily lives.

Furthermore, declaring an "emergency" to make the bill effective immediately is unjustified and appears to be a ploy to rush through changes without adequate public debate. The original referendum was set for November precisely because it aligns with higher voter engagement, ensuring a more representative outcome. SB 1599's public hearing on February 9, 2026, in the Joint Special Committee on Referendum

Petition 2026-302, should be used to amplify opposition, not rubber-stamp this undemocratic shift.

I urge you to reject SB 1599 and respect the will of the over 250,000 Oregonians who signed the petition. Let the people decide in November, as intended. Anything less is an affront to transparency and fair governance.

Sincerely,
David Kime
Oregon Resident