

Submitter: Stanley W. Fields
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or SB1599
Topic:
Subject: Opposition to HB 1599 — Protect the People's Vote and the November 2026
Ballot

Members of the Legislature,

I am writing in strong opposition to HB 1599 and any effort to move this voter-initiated referendum from the November 2026 general election ballot to the May 2026 primary.

The people have already spoken. This referendum qualified under the clear expectation—shared by voters, advocates, and election officials alike—that it would be decided in November 2026, when the electorate is at its broadest, most representative, and most reflective of the will of the state as a whole.

Shifting the measure to a primary ballot is not a neutral administrative change. Legislative leadership has openly acknowledged that doing so confers political advantage. That admission alone should disqualify this proposal. Manipulating election timing to influence outcomes undermines public trust and violates Oregon's democratic process.

Primary elections consistently produce lower turnout and a narrower electorate. They are, by design, partisan contests. Using a primary election to decide a statewide referendum strips millions of Oregonians—particularly independents and less frequent voters—of a meaningful voice on an issue that affects everyone.

This is not about policy preference. It is about process, fairness, and respect for voters. Once the Legislature begins retroactively changing the rules of the ballot after citizens have met all legal requirements, no referendum is safe from political interference.

Oregon's initiative system exists precisely to allow the public to weigh in when trust in institutions is strained. Moving the goalposts midstream confirms the very concerns that led citizens to pursue this referendum in the first place.

I urge you to oppose HB 1599 and allow this measure to appear on the November ballot as expected. Protect voter confidence. Protect democratic norms. Let the people decide—fairly, transparently, and without procedural gamesmanship.

Stanley W. Fields
4th Generation Oregonian and Unaffiliated Voter