

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

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you to vote NO on SB 1599. This bill attempts to move the referendum vote on HB 3991's massive tax increases from November to May—a change that undermines the democratic process and disrespects the will of over 250,000 Oregonians who signed the petition.

****SB 1599 Manipulates the Democratic Process****

When Oregonians signed Referendum Petition 2026-302, they were told the vote would occur in November 2026. Moving it to May, when voter turnout is historically much lower, is a calculated attempt to pass unpopular tax increases with less public scrutiny. This is not good governance—it's political maneuvering to avoid accountability.

****The Tax Increases Are Harmful to Working Families****

HB 3991 raises the gas tax from \$0.40 to \$0.46 per gallon, increases vehicle title fees from \$77 to \$216, raises registration fees, and doubles the payroll tax. These increases will hurt the very people Oregon claims to want to help.

Gas taxes are regressive—they hit low-income families the hardest. Studies show fuel taxes consume nearly 10% of income for the lowest earners compared to just 2% for the highest. Working families already struggling with inflation and high costs cannot afford another financial burden.

****Rural Oregonians Will Suffer Most****

Rural communities like those in Eastern Oregon will be disproportionately impacted. We have longer commutes, fewer public transportation options, and often drive less fuel-efficient vehicles due to work requirements and road conditions. This isn't a choice—it's a necessity. These tax hikes punish rural Oregonians for living where we live.

****Oregonians Oppose These Taxes****

Eighty percent of Oregonians oppose increasing the gas tax. Rather than listening to

voters, the legislature is trying to rush this vote through a low-turnout primary. That's not representation—that's avoidance.

****ODOT Has a Spending Problem, Not a Revenue Problem****

Before asking taxpayers for more money, ODOT needs to demonstrate it can manage what it already receives. The 2023 revelation of a \$1 billion accounting error shows serious mismanagement. Oregonians shouldn't be asked to pay more when the agency can't even track what it has.

****Small Businesses Will Be Hurt****

Increased fuel and vehicle costs force small businesses to choose between hiring employees or absorbing higher operating expenses. These costs will be passed on to consumers through higher prices, creating a ripple effect throughout our economy.

****Conclusion****

SB 1599 is an attempt to circumvent the will of the people. Let Oregonians vote in November as originally intended. Reject this manipulation of our democratic process.

Vote NO on SB 1599.

Thank you for your consideration.