

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

Chair and Committee Members,

SB 1599 – Moves the election date for the parts of chapter 1, Oregon Laws 2025 (special session), referred to the people by Referendum Petition 2026-302, to the primary election held on May 19, 2026. Declares an emergency, effective on passage.

The referendum petition itself listed November 2026 as the voting date. By changing it with legislative action would go against what voters signed.

This act is a political and legal mechanism for direct democracy and not a Republic.

Once a referendum is validated, it is legally binding and must be completed as written. The validation process ensures that the petition meets statutory requirements. Verified referendum petitions carry both a legal and ethical responsibility to be completed exactly as written.

Legal obligation: Once a petition is validated, the measure must appear on the ballot exactly as submitted. Any changes to the text or intent would violate the constitutional and statutory framework governing direct democracy.

Ethical responsibility: The ethical duty stems from the principle of popular sovereignty—voters are entitled to a clear, accurate, and unaltered choice. Altering the measure after validation undermines public trust and the integrity of the democratic process.

A retroactive civil law must have “due process” and serve a legitimate legislative purpose and not be arbitrary or oppressive. The move from the General Election (where 60% more people vote) to the Primary election is a political move giving candidates time to recover from voting for the ODOT tax package as Democrat leadership admits..

Democrat leadership argues this change would provide greater clarity on transportation funding and reduce political risk for Democrats during the general election.