

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

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Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am Thomas Flowers, an Oregon resident, and I strongly oppose SB 1599. This bill undermines democracy and voter participation by moving the vote to a historically low turnout primary.

Referendum 2026-302, qualified with over 250,000 signatures, mine included. It challenges tax and fee increases in parts of HB 3991, including higher gas taxes, vehicle registration/title fees, and payroll taxes. These changes burden working families, drivers, and businesses.

Petition signers expected, and Oregon law provides, a high-turnout November vote. Shifting to May would slash participation; primaries typically draw far fewer voters than generals, often by half or more. This disadvantages the broader public and favors lower-turnout dynamics. It subverts the will of the 250,000+ Oregonians who petitioned for a full November vote. The move is unprecedented, likely unconstitutional, and rushed. It limits the time for public education, debate, and voters' pamphlet arguments. It appears designed to suppress accountability on unpopular taxes rather than promote fair elections.

Reject SB 1599 and let Referendum 2026-302 proceed in November, where the voices of every Oregonian can be heard. Thank you for your consideration.

Truthfully,  
Thomas Flowers