

Submitter: Brad Peters
On Behalf Of: BradPetersforOregon.com
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or
Topic: SB1599

Chair and Members of the Committee:

SB 1599 changes the rules of the game after the game has already started. Oregonians signed this petition under the long-standing expectation that statewide referenda are decided in November, when the broadest cross-section of voters participates. Moving the vote to a lower-turnout primary election alters the democratic context, narrows participation, and risks the appearance that process is being shaped for advantage rather than fairness. Calling this an “emergency” when the regular November election is readily available further undermines public trust — emergency powers should address urgent threats, not scheduling preferences.

This bill also concentrates control over the very information voters rely on, placing preparation of the explanatory statement and financial estimate in the hands of a legislative committee instead of established neutral processes. Combined with compressed review timelines, reduced transparency around ballot arguments, and a single-measure voters’ pamphlet, the measure weakens safeguards that ensure referenda are clear, balanced, and publicly vetted. Elections work best when rules are stable, information is independent, and voters have full opportunity to weigh in; SB 1599 moves in the opposite direction, creating avoidable doubt about fairness, neutrality, and the integrity of the process.