

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

Opposing Testimony on SB 1599 / Referendum Petition 2026-302

I submit this testimony in strong opposition to this bill.

Article IV, section 1 of the Oregon Constitution explicitly reserves to the people the power of referendum. That power exists to restrain the legislature, not to be managed, modified, or diluted once the people have lawfully exercised it. After signatures have been verified by the Secretary of State, the legislature has no legitimate authority to manipulate the timing or conditions of the vote in order to influence the outcome.

This bill does exactly that.

By moving the referendum to a primary election, the legislature is knowingly placing a statewide vote before a smaller, less representative electorate. That is not a neutral administrative decision—it is an outcome-driven maneuver that undermines the intent of Article IV, section 1, and violates the spirit of popular sovereignty guaranteed by the Oregon Constitution.

This bill further concentrates control over the voters' pamphlet by assigning a joint legislative committee the exclusive authority to prepare the explanatory statement and financial estimate. These materials are critical to voter understanding. Allowing the legislature—the very body whose law is being challenged—to control those explanations is a direct conflict of interest and a threat to the fair and impartial presentation of information required for a valid referendum.

The bill repeatedly suspends standard election statutes and safeguards for a single, politically inconvenient measure. Selectively rewriting election law midstream sets a dangerous precedent and erodes public trust in Oregon's electoral integrity.

The emergency clause is the most troubling provision of all. Article IV, section 28 of the Oregon Constitution limits emergency declarations to circumstances necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety. No such emergency exists here. Invoking emergency powers to shield this bill from public scrutiny and delay judicial review is an abuse of constitutional authority.

The people complied with every constitutional and statutory requirement to refer this law to a vote. The legislature must now do the same.

This bill should be rejected in its entirety.
Thank you for the opportunity to testify.