

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

I wish to express deep concern over Governor Kotek's continued attempts to circumvent the will of Oregon's voters. The very foundation of our state's democracy rests on transparency, accountability, and respect for the processes that ensure every Oregonian's voice is heard. Any effort by the Governor to manipulate the timing or process of a major vote — such as the transportation bill — represents a troubling disregard for those democratic principles.

I read that the Oregon Secretary of State's comments on attempts to move the vote on the transportation bill could not happen because of the petition that was signed by 250,000 voters. It turns out this is not the case, or we wouldn't be here, addressing it once again. Moving the vote to May only accommodates the political interests of Governor Kotek.

The vote should not be moved if we are to uphold the integrity of our election processes and prevent undue influence from the executive branch.

Governor Kotek must be reminded that leadership is not about forcing outcomes through procedural gamesmanship, but about earning public trust through open dialogue, respect for the law, and genuine collaboration. Oregonians deserve accountability, not manipulation.

I urge this administration to return its focus to transparency and fair governance — to honor the intent of the voters rather than subvert it. Let the people's voice, expressed through lawful and timely elections, remain the guiding force in Oregon's democracy.