

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly,

I am writing regarding the decision to move Referendum Petition 2026-302 to the May 2026 primary ballot rather than the November 2026 general election.

Although the legislature has authority over election scheduling, actively moving this referendum from the general election cycle to a lower-turnout primary raises serious concerns about democratic legitimacy. The record-setting petition effort clearly reflects a desire for broad public participation. I respectfully submit that this decision does not reflect the spirit of representative government or the clearly expressed intent of the people. When citizens mobilize at historic levels to secure a vote, the response should strengthen public confidence, not narrow the electorate.

Oregonians gathered an extraordinary number of signatures to refer this transportation measure to the ballot. That effort was not merely procedural. It was a civic declaration that this issue warrants full public consideration. When citizens organize at that scale, they are asking for transparency, time, and the widest possible participation.

The November general election consistently produces the highest turnout and the most representative cross-section of Oregon voters. It is when the greatest number of citizens are engaged in the democratic process. For a measure with significant statewide fiscal implications, the general election provides the clearest and most legitimate expression of the public will.

A May primary election is legally valid, but it historically results in lower turnout and a more limited electorate. When decisions involve long-term transportation funding and taxation, they should be decided by the broadest participation possible.

Representative government is built on trust. Trust grows when elected officials seek not only what is procedurally permissible, but what is demonstrably fair and broadly participatory. Moving this measure to a lower-turnout election risks undermining public confidence in the neutrality of the process.

This is not a partisan objection. It is a principled one. If the legislature is confident in the merits of this policy, it should welcome the most inclusive election available.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider the timing of this vote and to allow Referendum Petition 2026-302 to appear on the November 2026 general election ballot.

Oregonians deserve a process that reflects both the letter and the spirit of democratic representation.

Sincerely,
Khalil Burton