

Submitter: Denice Searcy
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or
Topic: SB1599
NO on SB 1599

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 1599, which would move the vote on Referendum Petition 302 from the November 2026 general election to the May primary.

This act is a political and legal mechanism for direct democracy and not a Republic. Once a referendum is validated, it is legally binding and must be completed as written. The validation process ensures that the petition meets statutory requirements. Verified referendum petitions carry both a legal and ethical responsibility to be completed exactly as written.

Legal obligation: Once a petition is validated, the measure must appear on the ballot exactly as submitted. Any changes to the text or intent would violate the constitutional and statutory framework governing direct democracy.

Ethical responsibility: The ethical duty stems from the principle of popular sovereignty—voters are entitled to a clear, accurate, and unaltered choice. Altering the measure after validation undermines public trust and the integrity of the democratic process. A retroactive civil law must have “due process” and serve a legitimate legislative purpose and not be arbitrary or oppressive. The move from the General Election (where 60% more people vote) to the Primary election is a political move that stinks to high heaven and shows the true character and lack of integrity of the Democratic Party. SHAME ON YOU!!

Oregon’s referendum process exists to ensure that major policy decisions—especially those involving tax increases and statewide impacts—are decided by the largest and most representative electorate possible. November general elections consistently produce significantly higher voter participation than primary elections. Moving this vote to May would exclude many voters, including independents and less frequent voters, and would undermine the legitimacy of the outcome. Voters who signed Referendum Petition 302 did so with the reasonable expectation that the measure would appear on the general election ballot, as is customary. Changing the election date after the petition has qualified alters the rules midstream and erodes public trust in Oregon’s direct democracy system.

Regardless of where someone stands on a specific policy, changing election timing to reduce voter turnout erodes trust in our democratic process. Referendums should

be decided by as many Oregonians as possible—not quietly resolved during low visibility elections. I urge lawmakers to respect the integrity of Oregon’s referendum process and oppose any effort to move citizen-led measures to smaller election dates. Democracy works best when participation is maximized, not minimized.