

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

Dear Members of the Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302,

I am Staci Holt, a resident of Creswell, Oregon, and one of more than 250,000 Oregonians who signed Referendum Petition 2026-302. This petition qualified the measure to repeal key parts of Chapter 1, Oregon Laws 2025 (special session)—the transportation law imposing a 6-cent gas tax hike, doubled transit payroll tax, and increased vehicle registration/title fees—for a vote by the people.

The petition sheets we signed explicitly stated the measure would appear on the November 3, 2026 general election ballot. This is the default under Article IV, Section 1 of the Oregon Constitution, which reserves the referendum power to the people and contemplates general elections for maximum participation. We relied on that promise when we gathered and submitted signatures—over 250,000 strong—to invoke our constitutional right.

SB 1599 retroactively changes this after qualification, moving the vote to the May 19, 2026 primary. This violates the reasonable expectations and rights of every signer in these ways:

Disenfranchisement Through Suppressed Turnout: Recent Oregon primaries have seen turnout of only 35-46% (e.g., 35.8% in 2024, 37.8% in 2022), compared to 60-72% in generals (e.g., 67-72% in recent cycles). Shifting to May predictably reduces voter participation, silencing hundreds of thousands who would vote in November. This undermines the referendum's purpose: broad expression of the people's will.

Breach of Faith and Process Integrity: We signed under a clear representation of a November vote. Altering the date post-qualification erodes trust in direct democracy. It sets a precedent that the Legislature can rewrite rules after citizens succeed in referring a law, especially when the measure challenges unpopular taxes.

Abuse of Authority for Political Gain: The emergency declaration lacks evidence of immediate need for public peace, health, or safety. Instead, this appears designed to avoid high-turnout scrutiny in November—potentially alongside the gubernatorial race—favoring partisan advantage over constitutional fidelity.

The overwhelming public response confirms this: As of the Feb. 9 hearing, nearly 3,500 written testimonies were submitted, with 99% in opposition. Oregonians see

this as an attempt to subvert our voices.

I urge the Committee to reject SB 1599. Honor the petitions we signed, keep Referendum 2026-302 on the November 2026 general ballot, and preserve faith in our referendum process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Staci Holt

Creswell Resident