

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

Co-Chair Jama and Gomberg, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am strongly opposed to SB 1599.

This bill would move the voter-approved referendum on the transportation tax package from the November 2026 general election—the date voters were told and expected—to the May 2026 primary. Changing the election date after voters have acted is wrong and undermines trust in our democratic process.

Here's how we got here:

- In the 2025 regular session, the Legislature advanced major transportation tax increases through HB 2025 and HB 3402, even though lawmakers openly acknowledged voters would likely reject them.
- Then in the 2025 special session, HB 3991 was pushed through, raising gas taxes, registration fees, title fees, and transit taxes—despite clear public opposition.
- Oregonians responded by using the referendum process. They gathered the signatures, met the requirements, and secured a November 2026 vote—exactly how the Oregon Constitution says this process should work.

Now that voters have done their job, SB 1599 attempts to change the rules midstream by moving the vote to May, when turnout is far lower. It is clear that this move is not about fairness or process—it's about avoiding the consequences of passing deeply unpopular taxes.

Legislators are elected to represent the people, but several elected officials are acting like Kings and Queens. The whole process for the Transportation Package feels like a "let them eat cake" moment. Oregonians have already said they oppose these transportation taxes through testimony and petitions, and they deserve the November vote they were promised.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote NO on SB 1599. Respect the referendum. Respect the democratic process. And most importantly, respect the people of Oregon.

Thank you.