

Submitter: Anthony Miller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1599

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in opposition to SB 1599.

Changing the timing of a referred measure is not a minor procedural decision. It directly affects voter participation, election clarity, and public trust. This measure should be decided in a high-turnout general election, not a primary.

Primary elections draw significantly fewer voters. Even in Oregon's vote-by-mail system, turnout in primary elections is consistently lower than in general elections. Lower-propensity voters, younger voters, and non-affiliated voters are less likely to participate in primaries. Moving a major referred measure to a primary effectively narrows the portion of the electorate making the decision. That may be legally permissible, but it is not aligned with the goal of broad democratic participation. When voters refer a law to the ballot, there is a reasonable expectation that the full electorate will weigh in. Shifting the vote to a lower-turnout election risks the perception that timing is being adjusted for political advantage rather than voter access.

This change would increase voter confusion. Election timing is one of the few aspects of the system voters assume is stable. Placing a high-profile statewide measure on a primary ballot — where many voters expect mostly party contests — reduces public awareness and preparedness. Complex policy questions deserve the attention and engagement that come with a general election, when more voters are focused on statewide issues and public information efforts have broader reach.

Public trust depends on neutral, predictable election timing. Regardless of intent, changing the date of a vote on a controversial or high-impact issue can appear manipulative. That perception alone can erode confidence in the process. Oregonians expect election rules to be consistent and not tailored in ways that affect who participates. Keeping the vote in a general election helps ensure broader participation and stronger legitimacy of the outcome. SB 1599 reduces participation, increases confusion, adds administrative burden, and risks undermining trust in Oregon's election system. There is no compelling reason to move this referred measure to a lower-turnout primary.

I respectfully ask you to oppose SB 1599 and allow Oregonians to vote on this issue

in a general election where the broadest possible electorate can participate.
Thank you for your consideration.

Anthony Miller
Rogue River, Oregon