

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

Opposing the switch of the referendum from November to May is primarily a matter of protecting voter participation and ensuring democratic legitimacy. Historical data consistently shows that voter turnout is significantly higher in November general elections—often double that of May primaries. For example, in Oregon's 2022 elections, turnout was 67% in November compared to just 37% in May. Moving a high-stakes issue to a "low-turnout" spring election can be viewed as an intentional strategy to "suppress the voice" of the broader electorate or to avoid political fallout during a general election. Furthermore, when citizens sign a petition for a referendum, they do so with the understanding that the vote will occur on a specific date; changing that date "moves the goalposts" and can feel like a betrayal of the very process intended to empower the people. Ultimately, keeping the referendum in November ensures that the greatest number of citizens have a say, rather than allowing a smaller, less representative group to decide a major policy issue in an "off-cycle" contest.