

Submitter: Amber George

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 submitting this testimony in opposition to moving the gas tax hike bill from the November 2026 General Election ballot to the May Primary ballot.

Registered voters across Oregon followed the law. They gathered the required number of signatures. They met the legal threshold. They complied with the rules set forth by this state to ensure the public has a voice in major policy decisions. That process is not casual — it requires time, organization, financial resources, and civic engagement. It represents thousands of Oregonians participating in democracy exactly as the system was designed.

So I ask: why have a formal, legally defined signature process to refer or amend legislation if, once citizens successfully complete it, the Legislature can simply alter the timeline to produce a different political outcome?

The initiative and referendum process exists to provide a check and balance — a safeguard for the people when there is significant public concern about legislation. Changing the election date after voters have lawfully met all requirements undermines confidence in that system. It sends a troubling message that due process applies only when it is politically convenient.

A November general election ensures the broadest voter participation. Turnout in general elections is consistently higher than in primary elections, particularly in a state with many unaffiliated and independent voters. Moving this issue to a May primary would likely reduce participation and narrow the electorate deciding on a policy that affects every Oregonian — especially working families already burdened by rising fuel and transportation costs.

This is not about party politics. It is about fairness, transparency, and respecting the rules that the state itself established. If citizens are expected to follow the law in gathering signatures and qualifying a measure for the ballot, then the Legislature should be equally bound to respect that process once it has been completed.

Oregonians deserve consistency in their democratic systems. They deserve to know that when they follow the rules, their efforts will not be restructured for political convenience.

I urge you to honor the integrity of the referendum process and allow this measure to remain on the November 2026 General Election ballot as qualified.

Thank you for your time and consideration.