

Submitter: Traci Hensley
On Behalf Of: 250949 Oregonians that signed a petition for NOV
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1599

Co-Chairs Jama & Gomberg, and members of the committee,

I respectfully urge you to oppose any effort to move this referendum from the November general election ballot to a May election.

Oregonians have already spoken clearly and lawfully. 250,949 voters signed a petition that explicitly stated the referendum would appear on the November general election ballot. Those signatures were not abstract expressions of interest; they were collected under a specific representation about when the vote would occur. Changing the election date after the fact disregards the understanding under which those citizens participated.

The referendum process exists to give the people a direct voice in their government. It is a constitutional right reserved to the voters. When nearly a quarter of a million Oregonians take the time to read, sign, and submit a petition that clearly specifies a November vote, altering that timeline undermines public trust in the integrity of that process.

November general elections consistently produce the highest voter turnout in Oregon. They ensure the broadest possible participation across geographic, demographic, and political lines. Moving the referendum to May would likely result in significantly lower turnout, meaning fewer Oregonians would ultimately decide the issue. On a matter important enough to generate 250,949 signatures, the decision should be made when voter participation is at its peak.

This is not a question of convenience. It is a question of fairness and fidelity to what voters were told. The state should not change the terms after citizens have fulfilled their part of the democratic process.

The credibility of our initiative and referendum system depends on consistency, transparency, and respect for voter intent. Maintaining the November ballot placement honors both the letter and the spirit of the petition that Oregonians signed.

For these reasons, I urge you to keep the referendum on the November general election ballot by voting NO on SB1599.