

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

Dear Committee Members, I am writing in strong opposition to any effort, including SB 1599, to move the voter referendum on the 2025 transportation tax and fee increases (from House Bill 3991) from the November 2026 general election to the May primary. Over 250,000 Oregonians signed petitions to place this measure on the ballot, qualifying it for November. This reflects clear public demand for a say on a major tax hike—including a 6-cent increase in the gas tax, higher vehicle registration and title fees, and a payroll tax increase—that was pushed through to address ODOT's budget overruns and mismanagement. Moving the vote to May would suppress turnout, as primary elections historically see far fewer voters than general elections. This appears designed to limit scrutiny, reduce visibility, and shield supporters—including Governor Kotek, who will appear on the November ballot—from accountability tied to this unpopular tax increase. ODOT's financial issues stem from poor budgeting and project overruns, not a lack of revenue. Oregonians should not face higher taxes without full, transparent debate in a high-turnout election. Respect the petitioners' intent and the law: keep the referendum in November. Thank you for considering this testimony. I urge you to reject any bill that changes the election date.

Sincerely,
John Halverson.