

## QuickPoint! The Defeat of Measure 120 is a Win for the Oregon System

By Naomi Inman

It's election time in Oregon and the *Oregonian* editorial board sent a bouquet of sorts to our friends at "[No Tax Oregon](#)" when they officially [recommended](#) a "no" vote on Measure 120, Oregon's \$4 billion transportation tax package.

*The Oregonian's* endorsement urged voters to "drive a stake through the heart of this cursed transportation package." That was music to the ears of a quarter-million Oregon taxpayers and voters—all volunteers—who signed the "No Gas Tax" referendum petition in a historic 38 days.

The larger story, however, is that Oregon voters get to vote on the tax hike at all—thanks to a pioneering form of direct democracy known as the "[Oregon System](#)." Since 1902, Oregonians have had the right to challenge laws passed by the legislature and refer them to the ballot for a public vote.

During the 2026 short session, Governor Kotek and union-backed legislators showed their contempt for the volunteer-led movement by moving the ballot measure up to May and suppressing opposition in the voters' pamphlet. Those tactics only raised the measure's profile and strengthened the case for its defeat on May 19.

Lawmakers also managed to spawn a new petition drive by passing SB1507, which would claw back a \$336 million federal tax cut from Oregon small business owners. The new referendum effort, dubbed "[No Tax Clawback](#)," should trigger the reflexive muscle of the same 250,000 Oregon voters who have until June 1 to collect 100,000 signatures at dozens of [locations](#).

For supporters of direct democracy, defeating Measure 120 would represent more than a policy victory. It would also affirm the strength of the Oregon System.

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