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DAYLIGHT AND DESTINATIONS: EXAMINING TIME, TRAVEL, AND TOURISM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, MANUFACTURING, AND TRADE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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DAYLIGHT AND DESTINATIONS: EXAMINING TIME, TRAVEL, AND TOURISM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, MANUFACTURING, AND TRADE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:03 a.m., in the John D. Dingell Room 2123, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gus Bilirakis (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Members present: Representatives Bilirakis, Dunn, Cammack, Obernolte, James, Bentz, Houchin, Fry, Lee, Kean, Evans, Goldman, Guthrie (ex officio), Schakowsky (subcommittee ranking member), Castor, Soto, Trahan, Clarke, Veasey, and Pallone (ex officio).

Also present: Representative Carter of Georgia.

Staff present: Ansley Boylan, Director of Operations; Jessica Donlon, General Counsel; Sydney Greene, Director of Finance and Logistics; Natalie Hellman, Professional Staff Member, Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade; Calvin Huggins, Clerk, Energy; Megan Jackson, Staff Director; AT Johnson, Special Advisor; Daniel Kelly, Press Secretary; Sophie Khanahmadi, Deputy Staff Director; Alex Khlopin, Policy Analyst, Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade; Brayden Lacefield, Special Assistant; Giulia Leganski, Chief Counsel, Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade; Sarah Meier, Counsel and Parliamentarian; Joel Miller, Chief Counsel; Seth Ricketts, Special Assistant; Chris Sarley, Member Services/Stakeholder Director; Matt VanHyfte, Communications Director; Jane Vickers, Press Assistant; Hannah Anton, Minority Policy Analyst; Keegan Cardman, Minority Staff Assistant; Kelly Fabian, Minority Chief Counsel, Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade; Tiffany Guarascio, Minority Staff Director; Jackson Hall, Minority Intern; Megan Kanne, Minority Professional Staff Member; Shae Reinberg, Minority Intern; Andrew Souvall, Minority Director of Communications, Outreach, and Member Services; and Hannah Treger, Minority Staff Assistant.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The committee will come to order.

The chairman recognizes himself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Good morning, everyone. It is great to be back. Welcome to today's hearing examining time, travel, and tourism, and how they can strengthen our economy and our communities.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today. We appreciate you so much.

So, for me, this topic is personal. It hits home. I grew up in Tarpon Springs, Florida, in a strong Greek community where the Sponge Docks and our annual Epiphany celebration have welcomed visitors from around the world for generations.

In Florida's 12th Congressional District of Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco Counties, tourism supports family-owned restaurants, hotels, and outfitters, helping to sustain our Nature Coast way of life.

In Crystal River, you can swim with the manatees. In Weeki Wachee Springs, you can see the famous live mermaid show. And in Pasco County, Pasco County is home to a vibrant sports tourism industry with countless kayaking, waterways, and the AdventHealth ice rink, which just had the Wounded Warrior competition for hockey.

I know it is in Florida, but we have great hockey there. And it attracted over 630 people that participated in that particular tournament and their families.

So to further highlight the importance of tourism in the State of Florida, I would like to introduce for the record a study commissioned by Visit Florida showing tourism's economic impact in the State as well as Visit Florida's Marketing Effectiveness Survey revealing tourist preferences and ways to boost demand.

No objection, so ordered.

[The information appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Nationwide, travelers spent roughly $1.3 trillion last year, generating nearly $3 trillion in economic output and supporting over 15 million jobs. International visitors alone spent over $250 billion.

As we prepare for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, we have a once-in-a-generation runway to welcome the world and spread those benefits to communities large and small, not to mention that we are celebrating the 250-year anniversary of our great country next year.

The critical tool here is Brand USA, folks—I think you know that—our public-private partnership that markets American destinations abroad.

I was proud to author the bipartisan Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2014 to reauthorize Brand USA, because it helps attract visitors without relying on taxpayer dollars for funding.

We should ensure Brand USA remains strong and accountable as the global competition for travelers intensifies.

To achieve that, I filed legislation yesterday with my partner in the Tampa Bay area, Ms. Castor, to increase funding for Brand USA as we gear up for America's 250 celebration. Dina Titus also is a primary cosponsor from the great State of Nevada.

Today, we will also examine the tradeoffs to commerce, health, and safety that come with daylight saving time and any adjust-

ments to our clock-changing practices. Many argue that more evening daylight boosts consumer activity and tourism. Others raise valid concerns about sleep, road safety, and school routines.

Our job is to take actions that help American workers, businesses, of course, and visitors alike so we can deliver wins for communities like mine—and, of course, yours—giving families and businesses the opportunity and certainty, whether we lock the clock or maintain the status quo.

So thank you to the witnesses.

I also want to mention that we have spring training in the State of Florida, and that attracts a lot of economic—a lot of tourism. And we need one more team in the Tampa Bay area. So if anybody has any ideas, let us know.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bilirakis follows:]

Subcommittee Chairman Gus Bilirakis Opening Statement
November Hearing on Time, Travel, and Tourism
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing examining time, travel, and tourism and how they can strengthen our economy and our communities. Thank you to our witnesses for their testimony.

For me, this topic hits home. I grew up in Tarpon Springs, Florida, where the Sponge Docks and our annual Epiphany celebration have welcomed visitors from around the world for generations. In Florida's 12th District of Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco Counties—tourism supports family-owned restaurants, hotels, and outfitters, helping to sustain our Nature Coast way of life.

In Crystal River you can swim with the manatees. In Weeki Wachee Springs, you can see the famous live Mermaid show. And in Pasco County is home to a vibrant sports tourism industry with countless kayaking waterways and the AdventHealth Ice Rink.

To further highlight the importance of tourism to the State of Florida, I'd like to introduce for the record a study commissioned by Visit Florida showing tourism's economic impact in the state; as well as Visit Florida's Marketing Effectiveness survey revealing tourist preferences and ways to boost demand. (so ordered).

Nationwide, travelers spent roughly $1.3 trillion last year, generating nearly $3 trillion in economic output and supporting over 15 million jobs. International visitors alone spent over $250 billion. As we prepare for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, we have a once-in-a-generation runway to welcome the world and spread those benefits to communities large and small.

A critical tool here is Brand USA, our public-private partnership that markets American destinations abroad. I was proud to author the bipartisan Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2014 to reauthorize Brand USA, because it helps attract visitors without relying on taxpayer dollars for funding. We should ensure Brand USA remains strong and accountable as the global competition for travelers intensifies. To achieve that, I filed legislation yesterday with Mrs. Castor to increase funding for Brand USA, as we gear up for the America 250 celebrations.

Today we'll also examine the tradeoffs to commerce, health, and safety that come with Daylight Saving Time and any adjustments to our clock changing practices. Many argue that more evening daylight boosts consumer activity and tourism; others raise valid concerns about sleep, road safety, and school routines.

Our job is to take actions that help American workers, businesses, and visitors alike, so we can deliver wins for communities like mine and yours—giving families and businesses opportunity and certainty, whether we "lock the clock" or maintain the status quo.

Thank you to our witnesses. I look forward to the discussion. I yield back and recognize my friend, Ms. Schakowsky, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The chairman recognizes the ranking member, Ms. Schakowsky, for her 5 minutes for an opening statement.

I yield back.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAN SCHAKOWSKY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I hate to say this, but I believe that President Trump has contributed to a decrease right now in the people who want to come to the United States of America. That is right. We have seen a decrease in the people who are coming to visit us.

And I want to tell you that even people who are citizens of the United States of America often are mistaken as people who are foreign and taken away for a while until it is finally true that they are actually sometimes citizens and certainly members in the United States of America.

So we have seen a real decrease in the number of people who feel safe in coming to the United States, and that is a real—that is a serious problem.

I know that we are well aware that we want to have people come here and visit, but we have seen a 25 percent decrease in the number of people who have come here from Canada, who used to be our good friends, and they are not interested in seeing them coming into the United States right now. Of course, they are certainly not welcomed. And this is a real problem right now.

And so I just want to say that in Illinois there are people being grabbed and sent, whether or not they are citizens or not, depending on how they look. It has been a real trauma in my State, something that we do not need.

We want people to feel comfortable. We want them to come to our events that we have here. And I think some people are very nervous about that.

So I am going to yield now to Senator Castor to talk about this important issue, because we need to have people come and be welcomed to the United States.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Schakowsky follows:]

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Ranking Member Jan Schakowsky

Hearing on "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"

November 20, 2025

Trump's cruel and inhumane policies are harming American tourism. Tourism is essential to the U.S. economy. We want to encourage visitors to attend upcoming sporting events like the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics. In Chicago, ICE's extreme cruelty is hurting our city and scaring away tourists. We have seen a 25 percent reduction in tourism from our ally: Canada. America should welcome tourists, not scare them away. I yield to Representative Castor.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. I yield to you.

Ms. CASTOR. Well, thank you, Ranking Member Schakowsky.

And I want to thank Chair Bilirakis and our witnesses.

All of these topics are very important to the State of Florida, where we have no shortage of sunshine, and travel and tourism are the bedrocks of our economy and our small businesses and our way of life.

Just last year, Florida welcomed over 143 million visitors. And all across the United States last year, travel and tourism generated $2.9 trillion in economic output, supported over 15 million jobs, generated large amounts of local and State tax revenue.

And part of that success is due to Brand USA. Brand USA was created by the Congress in the Travel Promotion Act of 2009. It is a public and private partnership that promotes the United States to international tourists. In the last 12 years, their efforts have contributed big time to visitors to the United States.

And next year, the U.S.—in the State of Florida we are going to welcome a lot of international visitors due to the World Cup. And then on the horizon, we have the Olympics, the Paralympics, USA 250, and the Women's World Cup in the outer years.

Those are huge draws, but local economies also rely on a consistent return of visitors year after year to the beautiful, diverse beaches, mountains, and trails that America has to offer.

I want to mention that the temperature today in Tampa/St. Pete is going to be about 82 degrees and sunny. And we love our tourists, because this is a clean industry that really provides enormous opportunities.

So I see my time is running out. I will have more to say. I want to thank Chair Bilirakis for leading the charge to introduce the bipartisan VISIT USA Act. I am proud to be your partner on that and look forward to our discussion today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Castor follows:]

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Member Kathy Castor

Hearing on "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"

November 20, 2025

Thank you Ranking Member Schakowsky and thank you to our witnesses for being here to discuss time change, travel, and tourism.

All of these topics are important to my home state of Florida where we have no shortage of sunshine and travel and tourism are significant pillars of economic growth. In 2024, Florida welcomed 143 million visitors, driving local economies and supporting hospitality jobs. Next year, Florida will welcome visitors from across the country and around the world as Miami hosts seven World Cup matches during the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

We want tourism to continue to flourish in Florida and across the country. That is why we need to support this vital sector of the economy by bolstering programs like Brand USA, welcoming international visitors who spend their money here, lowering costs for Americans so they can afford to travel and attend events, and protecting travelers and consumers from deceptive pricing.

Brand USA is a public-private partnership that markets the United States – including Florida – to international travelers. President Trump's Big Ugly Bill reduced Brand USA's budget by 80 percent, imperiling its mission. I'm proud to announce that I will be co-sponsoring legislation with my colleague, Rep. Bilirakis to restore funding to Brand USA.

In addition to funding Brand USA, to encourage international tourism to the United States, we also need to address the fears and frustrations of international travelers caused by the policies of the Trump Administration, such as the Administration's harsh immigration enforcement and tariffs. We want international visitors to feel welcome when they come to the United States so that they come back and continue to spend their money in our local communities.

To keep domestic tourism thriving, we need to address the affordability crisis in America. Over half of Americans are cutting back on travel over economic concerns. We need real solutions to lower costs for American consumers including to protect travelers and consumers from surprise fees so that the price they see is the price they pay. My bipartisan Hotel Fees Transparency Act does just that for hotel stays. I'm proud that this bill passed the House and urge my Senate colleagues to follow suit and pass this bill.

Thank you to the witnesses for your testimony today and I yield back.

Ms. CASTOR. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. The gentlelady yields back.

And now we will recognize the chairman of the full committee, Mr. Guthrie, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRETT GUTHRIE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis, and thanks for having this hearing.

And thank you to our witnesses for being here.

When I looked at the title of this hearing, I realized how important punctuation is—Ms. Tees from English high school—because if you didn't use the commas, this would be "time travel tourism," but it is "time, travel, and tourism."

So thanks for being here and thanks for having this hearing.

So in Kentucky, travel and tourism are essential to our economy. In my district, the city of Bowling Green draws visitors from around the globe, whether they are touring the National Corvette Museum or exploring the expansive caves, caverns, and underground rivers in Mammoth Cave National Park or Abraham Lincoln's birthplace.

Those experiences don't just showcase Kentucky's beauty and ingenuity, they fuel local jobs and economic opportunity, just the vast—tourists that go to the national park, not just the national park but the surrounding communities who also have caves—not every cave is in Caves National Park—and have tourism as well and the things that work for our tourists.

So you can talk about travel and tourism in Kentucky. You can't talk about it without talking about the Kentucky Derby. It is one of the largest drivers of tourism across the country.

It is like we have a Super Bowl every year in Louisville. The 2025 Derby brought an estimated $441 million to our State. And that impact goes beyond the city limits of Louisville. It has significant impact on the entire Commonwealth and even the national economy.

And our Bourbon Trail is a great example of tourism, and it brings people from around the world.

But one factor that has outsize impact on our robust travel and tourism industry in the U.S. is the twice-annual clock-changing practice as a result of daylight savings time.

And my good friend from Florida is going to learn that her young daughter will not understand when the time changes, so she is going to be on a body schedule, not on a clock schedule. So it is always great to have Peanut in the room, so that is wonderful.

But shifting from 1 hour of sunlight from the beginning to the end of the day or vice versa can have different impacts on people's ability to exercise outside, attend live events, or attract customers to the retail business.

In my district, I live right on the line where it divides. And so I have communities that are eastern and communities in my district that are in central time zone. And so it is a personal decision, and each place needs to look at how they observe daylight savings time. And time would have real and varied impacts for families.

If you think about it, Bardstown, Kentucky, has the same time as Portland, Maine, but the sun comes up about an hour and a half earlier in Portland, Maine, than it does in Bardstown and sets an hour and a half earlier than it does in Bardstown.

Bowling Green, where I live, I have the exact same time as my good friend from Fort Worth, Mr. Goldman, but the sun rises for us an hour earlier and sets an hour earlier than it does, maybe a little over an hour.

So these are things we really need to discuss, and I am glad that we are.

And I have heard a range of arguments for and against biannual time change, including the impact, more or less, of sunlight so our children can safely travel to and from school and back. It impacts energy efficiency as well as concerns from Kentucky farmers, who say the time change disrupts their morning harvest.

No matter where we fall on the issue, I know that many of us have heard directly from our constituents about this topic. And given our committee's significant responsibility to oversee issues affecting interstate commerce, it is imperative that we revisit policies like daylight savings time regularly to ensure Federal law appropriately reflects the interests of all Americans.

Thank you again to our witnesses for joining us today, and I am looking forward to our conversation.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Guthrie follows:]

Chairman Brett Guthrie Opening Statement
November 20, 2025
Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis, and thank you to our witnesses for being here. Travel and tourism have long been and remain a cornerstone of the American economy – supporting small businesses, strengthening communities across the country, and sharing the beauty and success of this country with people from all over the world.

In Kentucky, travel and tourism are essential to our economy. In my district, the city of Bowling Green draws visitors from around the globe—whether they're touring the National Corvette Museum or exploring the expansive caves, caverns, and underground rivers at Mammoth Cave National Park. Those experiences don't just showcase Kentucky's beauty and ingenuity; they fuel local jobs and economic opportunity.

You can't talk about travel and tourism in Kentucky without talking about the Kentucky Derby– one of the largest drivers of travel and tourism across the country. The 2025 Derby brought in an estimated $441 million to our state, and that impact goes beyond the city limits of Louisville. It has a significant impact on the entire Commonwealth and even the national economy.

And Kentucky's bourbon trail is a great example of tourism invigorating the local economy.

But one factor that has an outsized impact on our robust travel and tourism industry in the U.S. is the twice-annual clock changing practice as a result of Daylight Saving Time. Daylight Saving Time affects more than our sleep schedules. It also impacts energy conservation, motor vehicle safety, health, and economic factors, to name a few. Shifting one hour of sunlight from the beginning to the end of the day, or vice versa, could have a serious effect on people's ability to exercise outside, attend live events, or attract customers to their retail businesses.

In my district, where communities are divided between two time zones, these issues aren't abstract, they are practical and personal. A change to how we observe Daylight Saving Time would have real and varying impacts for families, businesses, and travelers alike.

I have heard a range of arguments for and against the biennial time change, including the impact of more or less sunlight so our children can safely travel to and from school to impacts on energy efficiency, as well as concerns from Kentucky farmers who say the time change disrupts their morning harvest. No matter where we fall on the issue, I know that many of us have heard directly from constituents about this topic.

Given our committee's significant responsibility to oversee issues affecting interstate commerce, it's imperative that we revisit policies like Daylight Saving Time regularly to ensure federal law appropriately reflects the interests of all Americans.

Thank you again to our witnesses for joining us today, and I'm looking forward to our conversation. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GUTHRIE. And I will yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

Now I will recognize the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Pallone, for 5 minutes.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR., A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis.

Today, we are discussing travel, tourism, and time. As Americans, we are extremely fortunate to have such a large and diverse ntion to explore, from our beautiful national parks and historic sites to world-famous theme parks and concert and sports venues.

The U.S. provides a travel experience with something for everyone to enjoy. And tourism contributes trillions of dollars to our economy every year, creating jobs and supporting local businesses.

Now, in my district, which is along the Jersey Shore, tourists can enjoy beautiful coastal areas with serene beaches, embark on fishing ventures along the Atlantic Coast, explore the music scene at iconic venues like the Stone Pony, and so much more.

So last year alone, New Jersey welcomed more than 120 million visitors to our State, and they contributed more than $50 billion to our State's economy.

People around the world also recognize the top-tier travel experience America has to offer. Over the next decade, the U.S. will host many major world events. It has been mentioned by my colleagues, the Olympics and Paralympics, FIFA World Cup. I am proud to say that New Jersey will host multiple matches of the World Cup, including the final game, next summer.

And major world events present an opportunity for growth in the tourism sector that will bolster our economy, create jobs, and allow us to showcase all that America has to offer. And we must ensure that cities across the country are able to reap the full benefits of these major events.

Unfortunately, the tourism industry is suffering. The Trump administration's hostile trade policies and harsh immigration actions have caused numerous countries, including Germany, Canada, and the U.K., to issue travel warnings to their citizens looking to visit the United States.

High visa fees, stories of legal tourists being wrongfully detained at the border and treated cruelly by immigration agents, and strained diplomatic relationships discourage travelers from visiting our country because they simply do not feel welcome.

And we are already feeling the economic impacts. The International Trade Administration reported that travel spending is down almost 3 percent from this time last year.

If these trends continue, our economy could lose billions of dollars this year.

And we must ensure that travelers feel safe and welcome in the United States. We can't afford not to, frankly.

So for American families, rising costs on everyday essentials are forcing them to rethink travel plans. Republican policies are driving up prices for Americans on everything from groceries to healthcare premiums to their monthly power bills.

And as budgets get tighter, many Americans are cutting back on travel. Studies have shown that more than half of Americans are traveling less because of economic concerns.

So we know the U.S. has a lot to offer tourists, and our economy, jobs, and small businesses have much to gain from a thriving tourism industry, so we have to reverse course to encourage travel, both domestic and international, and ensure that international travelers choose the U.S. as a travel destination and that American families can afford to see this incredible nation from coast to coast.

Now, I know we are also discussing daylight savings time today.

Changing our clocks twice a year disturbs our natural sleep cycles, impacts productivity, and has been shown to be harmful to our health.

Most people I talk to would like to have a set time that doesn't change. But, unfortunately, we have not been able to come up with any consensus on the best solution of how to do that. Everyone has an opinion, particularly around the days that we either spring forward or fall back, but finding consensus has been difficult.

So I know this is an important issue. It also showcases our jurisdiction. Mr. Dingell, one of our former chairmen who is probably the most famous chairman of this committee, would often say that the Energy and Commerce Committee has jurisdiction over the world.

I don't know that he ever mentioned time, but I think when I tell people, "Oh, we have jurisdiction over time," they are very impressed. Maybe they shouldn't be, but they are. So it is certainly something we should discuss.

But I had a real hard time, Mr. Chairman, getting any kind of consensus amongst Democrats or Republicans or the Senate or the House. So I know this is going to be difficult.

But I do think most people think that we shouldn't be going back and forth, but then they don't agree on where we stay.

So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, and yield back, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"

November 20, 2025

Today, we're discussing travel, tourism and time. As Americans, we're extremely fortunate to have such a large and diverse nation to explore. From our beautiful national parks and historic sites to world-famous theme parks and concert and sports venues, the United States provides a travel experience with something for everyone to enjoy. Tourism contributes trillions of dollars to our economy every year, creates jobs, and supports local businesses.

In my district along the Jersey Shore, tourists can enjoy beautiful coastal areas with serene beaches, embark on fishing ventures along the Atlantic coast, explore the music scene at iconic venues like The Stone Pony, and so much more. Last year alone, New Jersey welcomed more than 120 million visitors to our state, and they contributed more than $50 billion to our state's economy.

People around the world also recognize the top tier travel experience America has to offer. Over the next decade, the United States will host many major world events including two Olympic and Paralympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. I am proud to say that New Jersey will host multiple matches including the final game of the World Cup next summer. Major world events present an opportunity for growth in the tourism sector that will bolster our economy, create jobs, and allow us to showcase all that America has to offer. We must ensure that cities across the country are able to reap the full benefits of these major events.

Unfortunately, the tourism industry is suffering. The Trump Administration's hostile trade policies and harsh immigration actions have caused numerous countries, including Germany, Canada, and the United Kingdom, to issue travel warnings to their citizens looking to visit the United States. High visa fees, stories of legal tourists being wrongfully detained at the border and treated cruelly by immigration agents, and strained diplomatic relationships discourage travelers from visiting our country because they simply do not feel welcome.

And we are already feeling the economic impacts. The International Trade Administration reported that travel spending is down almost three percent from this time last year. If these trends continue, our economy could lose billions of dollars this year. We must ensure that travelers feel safe and welcome in the United States. We can't afford not to.

For American families, rising costs on everyday essentials are forcing them to rethink travel plans. Republican policies are driving up prices for Americans on everything from groceries, to health care premiums, to their monthly power bills. And as budgets get tighter many Americans are cutting back on travel. Studies have shown that more than half of Americans are traveling less because of economic concerns.

The United States has much to offer tourists, and our economy, jobs, and small businesses have much to gain from a thriving tourism industry. We must reverse course to encourage travel – both domestic and international – and ensure that international travelers choose the United States as a travel destination and that American families can afford to see this incredible nation from coast to coast.

Today we will also discuss daylight saving time. Changing our clocks twice a year disturbs our natural sleep cycles, impacts productivity, and has been shown to be harmful to our health. Unfortunately, we have not been able to come to any consensus in the past on the best solution. Everyone has an opinion, particularly around the days that we either spring forward or fall back, but finding consensus has been difficult. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on this today.

And I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. I appreciate it very much.

The gentleman yields back.

Now our witnesses for today.

Ms. Rosanna Maietta, president and CEO of the American Hotel and Lodging Association.

Welcome.

Dr. Tyler J. Kleppe, EY Associate Professor of Accounting at the Von Allmen School of Accountancy at Gatton College of Business and Economics at the University of Kentucky.

Ms. Lisa Simon, CEO and executive director of the International Inbound Travel Association.

Welcome.

And Mr. Jay Karen, CEO of the National Golf Course Owners Association.

Welcome, sir.

So why don't we begin with Ms. Maietta. You are recognized for your 5 minutes of testimony. Welcome again.

STATEMENTS OF ROSANNA MAIETTA, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AMERICAN HOTEL AND LODGING ASSOCIATION; TYLER J. KLEPPE, PH.D., EY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ACCOUNTING, UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY; LISA SIMON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL INBOUND TRAVEL ASSOCIATION; AND JAY KAREN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL GOLF COURSE OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

STATEMENT OF ROSANNA MAIETTA

Ms. MAIETTA. Good morning, Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Rosanna Maietta, and I am the president and CEO of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the unified voice of the Nation's hotels.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Travel and tourism are essential to the American economy. Travel opens doors and builds appreciation for American culture and values. It is how we connect with each other on a human level. It is how we build business relationships that make this country go. It is, of course, how we enjoy well-earned vacation time.

Hotels are at the heart of travel. They are where we start and end each day, our homes away from home.

I am proud to note that all of you have hotels in your district. Most of you have more than a hundred of them. All of them are economic engines when they are allowed to flourish.

The majority of hotels in this country are small-business owned. Hotels generate nearly $900 billion in GDP annually, contribute $83 billion in tax revenue, employ more than 2 million workers. That means our industry supports one in every 25 jobs across this Nation.

I do think it is important for you to be aware that the past 5 years have been challenging for our industry, which has yet to fully recover from the pandemic. While there was a surge in travel immediately after it, hotel occupancy rates have since softened.

Since 2020, hotel owners and operators have struggled with rising operating costs due to increasing insurance premiums and interest rates and higher labor and healthcare costs. These expenses have increased four times faster than revenue. The recent shutdown exacerbated these challenges.

We also face significant staffing shortages. Nearly half of the Nation's hotels remain severely or partially understaffed.

Despite it all, hotels remain open, resilient, and committed to serving their communities.

And we believe the future is bright. Major happenings, like the World Cup, America 250, and the Olympics, are right around the corner. These have the potential to drive surges in both major and secondary markets and generate tax revenue, infrastructure investment, and workforce development, and, importantly, show the rest of the world the best of America.

Crucially, the tax reform bill signed into law this summer was a particular bright spot. It delivered the clarity and permanence that hotel owners and small businesses across the country urgently need to be able to invest in their communities and expand their operations. And we are proud that more than 800,000 hotel employees will keep more of what they earned through No Tax on Tips.

Looking to the future, congressional decisions on Government funding, international travel, and workforce stability will determine whether hotels can fully welcome millions of visitors for these events, and our industry recommends four specific policy solutions.

First, we echo the letters from Congress to the Departments of Homeland Security and Labor urging that they release the maximum allowable number of supplemental H–2B visas. These visas are critical to helping hotels maintain operations, especially on the eve of the WorldCup.

Second, restore full funding to Brand USA, the Nation's destination marketing organization, via the VISIT USA Act. Brand USA consistently delivers one of the highest returns on investment of any Federal program by promoting the United States to the rest of the world.

Third, we urge lawmakers to pass a long-term funding bill before the January deadline. The recent shutdown cost more than $1.2 billion in lost economic activity just tied to hotel stays, hurting the communities that we serve.

Lastly, Congress should pass the American Franchise Act, which provides essential clarity and protection to preserve the franchise relationship and safeguard brand standards. Franchised hotels are the backbone of the hotel industry, accounting for nearly 60 percent of U.S. hotels.

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and members of the committee, thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with each member of this committee to ensure that America remains the most hospitable nation in the world.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Maietta follows:]



Written Testimony of Rosanna Maietta

President and CEO
American Hotel and Lodging Association

Submitted to the
U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism.

November 20, 2025

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the state of American travel and tourism and the hotel industry, a sector that is foundational to our national identity and also indispensable to the U.S. economy. My name is Rosanna Maietta, and I am the President and CEO of the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA), the unified voice of the nation's hotels and the tens of thousands of small business owners, franchisees, and community partners who power America's lodging industry and employ millions of workers across the country.

For more than 115 years, AHLA has represented every segment of the hotel and lodging sector, from family-owned small businesses to iconic global brands; from independent inns and bed-and-breakfasts to real estate investment trusts (REITs), management companies, and state hotel associations. Together, we anchor the travel ecosystem that enables Americans and international visitors to explore our great country, creates opportunity for millions of workers, and supports economic vitality in communities coast to coast.

Travel and tourism represent one of America's greatest economic engines. Hotels alone generate nearly $900 billion in GDP annually; contribute $83 billion in federal, state, and local taxes; and support one in every 25 jobs in the United States. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 2033, one in every eight jobs will be in the hospitality and leisure sector. Beyond the numbers, travel is what binds us as a nation—connecting families, fueling commerce, strengthening local economies, supporting small businesses, and showcasing the best of America to the world.

The hotel industry offers more than just a job. It creates opportunities for fulfilling, lifelong careers and pathways to accessing a better life – where, regardless of background or circumstances, hotel associates can achieve prosperity through perseverance and a commitment to service. The most distinguished

leaders in our industry, from general managers to owners to brand CEOs, can recall starting on property washing dishes, making beds, and serving guests. In every corner of America, from city centers and interstate exits, to roadside attractions, and exotic destinations, hotels are more than just buildings – they are symbols of upward mobility and the success that comes with achieving the American Dream.

Since the pandemic ended, average hotel wages have increased more than 10% faster than average wages throughout the general economy. Hotels provide flexible hours and better benefits to demonstrate commitment to those who comprise the foundation of our industry.

The lodging industry is largely composed of small businesses, including nearly 60% that are owned by franchisees. The franchise model is foundational to the lodging industry as it empowers small and family-run businesses, often first-time entrepreneurs, to create good local jobs and to invest in their communities.

Today, I am honored to share AHLA's perspective on the state of the lodging economy, the policies that can unlock significant economic growth for our country, and the federal actions urgently needed to strengthen American travel and tourism at a pivotal moment for our nation.

Overview of the Current State of the Lodging Economy: Operating Costs, Staffing, Development, and Investment

Recent hotel industry performance indicators show an industry confronting material economic headwinds. According to the latest data, the U.S. hotel industry is experiencing a prolonged period of decline in revenue per available room, which is the standard metric for the industry's health. For hoteliers across the country, this means demand is softening. Occupancy levels have also fallen industrywide, with revenues declining across nearly every chain scale and segment. For the vast majority of hotels, particularly those

serving middle-income, business, and public service travelers, the trends translate into thinner margins and increasingly difficult operating decisions.

Staffing shortages remain a central challenge as well. Nearly half of the nation's hotels remain severely or at least partially understaffed. This imbalance affects the guest experience, limits revenue potential, and constrains the ability of properties to fully capitalize on peak-season demand. In a sector that supports approximately nine million jobs nationwide, these staffing challenges reflect broader workforce shortages and highlight the need for reforms that permit more legal guest workers, workforce development investments, and other policies to expand the labor pool.

Compounding these challenges is a slowdown in hotel investment and development. While the number of proposed projects in the pipeline has grown steadily since 2021, the number of projects actually under construction has declined since the third quarter of 2024, and hotel transaction volume has fallen significantly since 2023. Multiple surveys underscore why: 32% of hoteliers are delaying projects, 24% are scaling them back, and 8% are canceling development plans entirely. Persistent construction cost inflation and restrictive financing conditions, exacerbated by ongoing uncertainty around interest rates and federal policy, are making it harder for hotel owners to renovate aging properties or bring new supply online. Further, 81% of respondents reported higher material and supply costs and nearly 60% cited reduced profitability as a result.

High interest rates constrain the lodging industry's ability to invest in new development, renovate existing properties, refinance debt, and pursue transactions that would otherwise stimulate economic activity. Lower interest rates would reduce the cost of capital, restart stalled projects, and enable hotel owners to undertake the modernization and expansion necessary to meet evolving traveler expectations. A more

favorable interest rate environment would promote additional construction, support thousands of jobs in the skilled trades, stimulate lending activity, and strengthen local economies reliant on tourism.

The lodging industry is fundamentally strong, but these data points collectively paint a picture of an industry that is increasingly stressed. Hotels remain open, resilient, and committed to serving their communities, yet the economic foundation that supports growth is weakening. The decisions Congress will make in the coming weeks and months on government funding, support for international travel, and workforce stability, will determine whether our industry is in the best position to welcome the millions of guests set to come to our country for the World Cup, America 250 and beyond.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Provides Tax Certainty for the Hotel Industry

While the industry is facing many challenges, a particular bright spot for hoteliers came with the passage of the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act." The new law delivered the clarity and permanence that hotel owners and small businesses across the country urgently needed. A central pillar of economic stability for the hotel and lodging sector has long been a predictable and pro-growth federal tax environment. Prior to the law's enactment, hoteliers faced millions of dollars in tax hikes as critical provisions pertaining to business operations, accounting, and real estate were set to expire. These entrepreneurs had already endured unprecedented economic challenges in recent years, and prolonged uncertainty in federal tax policy threatened their ability to reinvest, hire workers, and support their communities.

For hotel owners in particular, the permanency of the small business deduction under Section 199A of the Tax Code was essential and restored confidence. The majority of hotel owners are small business operators who rely on this deduction to manage risk, reinvest in their properties, and sustain local jobs. Equally important was the restoration of full bonus depreciation and immediate expensing, which will enable

essential renovations, technology upgrades, security enhancements, and energy-efficiency improvements. Hotels are inherently capital-intensive businesses that require continual modernization, and without these provisions, many small owners faced steep barriers to reinvestment.

Over the next decade, we anticipate the provisions made permanent under the One Big Beautiful Bill will stimulate tens of billions of dollars in new capital investment across the lodging industry. This includes accelerated property upgrades, new development, workforce expansion, and broad-based economic growth in communities across the country.

Impact of Government Shutdown on Industry

By contrast, the recent federal government shutdown intensified pressures on our industry and had real impacts on communities across the country. Nationally, the shutdown cost the American economy an estimated $31 million each day solely from reduced hotel stays, with our members absorbing the bulk of that loss. Overall, the shutdown amounted to more than $1.2 billion in losses to the economy from a lack of hotel stays and over $6 billion in losses to the overall travel and hospitality sector. For an industry dependent on transient guests, these losses can never be recovered. The majority of these impacts were felt most acutely by small business owners and their employees. Furthermore, the loss of travel throughout the shutdown had downstream effects; for every $100 spent at a hotel, another $234 is spent throughout a guest's trip on things like dining, theaters, and retail, all of which generate critical tax revenue for public services. That spending was lost during the shutdown.

When the shutdown hit, the financial loss was not abstract or gradual; it was immediate, stunning, and in many cases irreversible. In the span of just three weeks, one midscale hotel in the Southeast, serving a military community, lost nearly $200,000 in conference business alone. At this one property, a daily loss

of more than $2,500 over a two-month period wiped out the revenue that would have supported staffing, utilities, and basic operations. And that hotel is not alone. Up and down Main Streets across America, neighboring properties that rely on military, federal, and associated travel endured a wave of cancellations that erased months of carefully planned income.

In AHLA's most recent member surveys, 64% of hoteliers reported reduced revenue directly tied to the shutdown, and nearly 54% reported a drop in leisure travel as consumers reacted to the uncertainty and economic unease created during the shutdown. These losses were not abstract or confined to large corporations; rather, the strain was felt by hometown businesses across the country, where reduced cash flow meant deferred upgrades, thinner staffing, and mounting financial pressure on local hotel employees and operators alike.

Further, the shutdown upended the lives of many Americans, rattling consumer confidence and prompting trip cancellations during a critical period for hotels and tourism-dependent communities. Visitors who might otherwise book trips delayed plans or cancelled them outright, harming local businesses in gateway cities, national park regions, seasonal businesses, coastal communities, and others that rely heavily on tourism. These impacts extended far beyond the immediate fiscal consequences. Visa processing slowed or halted entirely, diminishing inbound travel. Federal workers responsible for essential travel and tourism-related functions could not perform their duties. National parks and cultural sites closed or operated with limited services. Airport operations faced strain as screening, safety, and customs personnel worked without pay, compounding delays and discouraging travel.

As Congress approaches another funding deadline in January, I urge lawmakers to avoid the brinksmanship that has become all too common in recent years. Even the threat of a shutdown destabilizes the industry,

suppressing demand and making it impossible for travel businesses to plan ahead. The American people deserve a stable and predictable budgeting process that supports, rather than interrupts, the economic activity generated by travel and tourism. Preventing another shutdown must be a top priority for lawmakers across the aisle.

Meeting the Moment for Mega Events Nationwide

The years ahead offer an extraordinary opportunity for the United States to showcase itself to the world and reinforce the travel sector economy. Beginning in 2026, the United States will host the FIFA World Cup, followed by the national celebrations associated with the nation's 250th anniversary, and culminating in the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. These events represent a once-in-a-generation wave of global visibility and economic potential. Millions of visitors from across the globe will travel to the United States for these celebrations, filling hotel rooms, supporting local businesses, and stimulating long-term demand for American travel.

The World Cup, set to generate over $5 billion in economic impact across North America, promises to be a game-changer for the hospitality sector. With FIFA projecting $11 billion in revenue for the 2023-2026 cycle, including $3.1 billion from hotel rooms, hospitality rights and ticket sales, event venues have a significant chance to capitalize on the world's largest sporting event. The stakes are just as high when looking ahead to the 2028 Olympics. With an anticipated $11 billion in economic impact, the event will require 40,000 hotel rooms and an Olympic Village for 15,000 participants.

Hotels nationwide are already preparing for these events. Many markets will see surges in occupancy that will provide a much-needed boost to local economies, as visitors attending the games will also travel the country to experience America's cities, landmarks, and cultural institutions. These events will also catalyze

tax revenues, investment in infrastructure, property renovations, and workforce development, strengthening the long-term competitiveness of the U.S. travel sector. To fully seize this moment, I urge Congress and the Administration, as well as the business community and localities hosting these events, to come together on pro-growth policies that leverage these incredible opportunities, motivate international travel, and spur economic investment.

The Importance of International Travel and the Need for Federal Support

Despite the promise of future mega-events, the near-term forecast for inbound international travel in 2025 is deeply concerning. The U.S. Travel Association projects inbound international visits will decrease by over 6% this year, even as outbound U.S. travel grows. International inbound travel is accurately counted as a service export. When a foreign visitor spends money on hotels, meals, transportation, and retail in the United States, they are consuming American-produced services that cannot be outsourced. Just like selling a good overseas, the revenue from this foreign spending injects new money into the U.S. economy, making tourism one of America's largest service exports. Declines in international travel will result in the U.S. losing market share to competing nations, resulting in a travel trade deficit tracking close to $70 billion.

Reversing this trend requires swift federal action. First, we urge Congress to restore full funding to Brand USA, the nation’s destination marketing organization. Brand USA consistently delivers one of the highest returns on investment of any federal economic program by promoting the United States to international travelers. Cuts or uncertainty in its funding weaken America’s competitive position at a time when countries around the world are aggressively courting global visitors.

Second, we urge a delay in the implementation of the Visa Integrity fee. While well intentioned, the fee risks discouraging international visitors and creating additional administrative burdens that could further

suppress inbound travel. A delay in the fee's implementation would allow policymakers to evaluate its consequences and ensure that the United States remains an accessible and welcoming destination for global travelers.

Strengthening the Workforce Through H-2B Visa Expansion

The travel and tourism industry remains constrained by persistent labor shortages, especially in seasonal markets that rely on temporary workers to operate at full capacity during peak travel periods. To ensure our industry is prepared for the major events in the coming months and years, our hotels must be fully staffed. In a recent letter to Secretaries Noem and Chavez-DeRemer, a bipartisan, bicameral group of Members of Congress urged the Departments of Homeland Security and Labor to release the maximum allowable number of supplemental H-2B visas for Fiscal Year 2026 in a timely fashion. These visas are critical to helping hotels, resorts, and other seasonal businesses maintain operations, provide essential services, and avoid closures or reductions in service that harm local economies.

Labor shortages have grown more severe in recent years, and the H-2B program plays an essential role in addressing these gaps while protecting American workers. The program's structure ensures that U.S. workers are prioritized and that job opportunities, wages, and working conditions for domestic employees are not compromised. In fact, evidence shows that communities utilizing H-2B workers not only experience lower unemployment and higher average wages but **each H-2B worker supports up to five U.S. jobs**, underscoring the program's role in supporting and growing, not supplementing, the American workforce. Ensuring a timely and adequate release of supplemental visas will help provide the workforce with the certainty needed for hotels and resorts to prepare for their peak seasons and maintain the economic health of tourism-driven communities.

Expanding the H-2B visa program by increasing the cap and releasing supplemental visas ahead of the major events will ensure that hotels have enough time to fill their workforce shortages and be fully staffed ahead of the games.

Supporting the Franchise Model Through Passage of the American Franchise Act

The franchise business model remains foundational to the lodging industry. Franchised hotels support more than 2.8 million jobs and account for nearly 60 percent of all U.S. hotels. They also generate nearly $100 billion in economic impact annually. Franchising has proven to be one of the most successful drivers of entrepreneurship across the United States and throughout our history. The franchise business model lowers barriers to entry, fosters economic mobility, and supports thousands of small business owners who serve as pillars of their communities. Passage of H.R. 5267, the American Franchise Act, would provide essential clarity and protection to preserve the franchise relationship, safeguard brand standards, and prevent regulatory overreach that threatens the stability of this time-tested model. Ensuring the continued strength of franchising is essential to maintaining a diverse and resilient lodging industry.

Conclusion

The future of American travel and tourism is bright, but its success depends on the policy choices Congress makes over the coming months. With tax certainty, stable government operations, robust international promotion, a reliable seasonal workforce, support for small business franchisees, and a healthy capital environment, the United States can unlock extraordinary economic growth and cement its place as the world's premier travel destination. Travel is not partisan. Travel opens doors and builds appreciation for American culture and values. Importantly, it strengthens the fabric of every community and district in every state all across our nation.

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and members of the Committee, thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify today. The hotel and lodging industry stands ready to meet this moment. I look forward to working with each of you and this Committee to advance policies that support our workers, empower our small businesses, and ensure America remains the most welcoming nation in the world.

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Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you so very much. Appreciate it.

Dr. Kleppe, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your testimony. Welcome, sir.

STATEMENT OF TYLER J. KLEPPE, PH.D.

Dr. KLEPPE. Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Members Pallone and Schakowsky, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for your invitation to testify at this hearing.

My name is Tyler Kleppe. I am the EY Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky.

My research covers several topics related to capital markets and financial regulation. Of particular interest to this subcommittee and this hearing, I have recently published coauthored research that examines the effects of daylight saving time, or DST, phasing on capital market participants. I am excited to share the insights of this research with you today.

Before I discuss this research in detail, I want to make it clear that my testimony is based on my expertise as a researcher in capital markets. I am not an expert on the psychological or psychophysical impacts of DST phasing.

With that said, my interest in studying the effects of DST phasing on capital markets was motivated by the considerable evidence, including some that has been mentioned by the Members already, across other disciplines, indicating that DST adjustments negatively impact individuals and yield various negative consequences, including increased traffic and workplace accidents, atypically punitive judicial sentencing, and higher frequencies of heart attacks and brain dysfunction.

My research seeks to address whether these negative impacts spill over to another important but underexplored setting: public equity markets. Understanding how DST phasing impacts U.S. financial markets is crucial for understanding the broader economic implications of DST policy.

My work in this area is titled "The Effects of Daylight Saving Time Adjustments on Investor Information Processing." It was published in The Accounting Review, one of the leading accounting research journals.

This work is coauthored with Andrew Pierce at Georgia State University, Zac Wiebe at the University of Arkansas, and Teri Yohn at Emory University.

Now, in the study we examine the effects of spring forward—so in March—the DST advances on U.S. investors' processing of corporate earnings news. We focused on advances in March because these time shifts occur during spring earning season, which, as many of you might be aware of, it is a period when many public companies disclose earnings news to investors and other capital market stakeholders.

Now, given our interest in understanding how these adjustments affect investors' decision making, we view this as an ideal setting to examine our research question.

Using quarterly earnings announcements made by U.S. companies during this current DST regime—so we looked specifically

from 2007 through 2018—we examined investors' price responsiveness to earnings news.

Now, most of the time, a company's earnings map directly into company value. And consistent with this, decades of research in accounting and finance have shown that earnings news impacts stock prices.

This finding is so robust, it is a classical test of market efficiency in the capital markets literature. In other words, when stock prices are less responsive to earnings news, this is evidence that markets are less efficient.

Consistent with DST advances dampening the investor response to earnings news, we observe significantly lower price responsiveness for earnings announcements made in the week following a DST advance relative to other announcements.

Now, this finding is consistent with DST adjustments inducing cognitive impairment, such that investors are slower to process information contained in these very important earnings announcements.

Now, our study adds to our collective understanding of how DST adjustments impact capital markets and highlights an important economic cost of DST phasing.

Market efficiency is crucial for a well-functioning financial system, and thus we view our evidence that DST advances impair the efficiency of U.S. equity markets, which are well-known as the most efficient and sophisticated markets in the world, to be meaningful and relevant to U.S. policymakers.

In particular, we find that retail investors are particularly susceptible to the cost of these DST advances, which we view as relevant, because there could be a disadvantage to retail investors versus the more sophisticated investors.

Now, that said, we acknowledge that we are only one of several economic studies that examine the impacts of DST phasing. Thus, I believe it is prudent to consider the evidence as a whole in making any policy decisions as opposed to focusing on one particular finding in isolation.

Moreover, our evidence cannot speak directly to any potential changes in processing costs associated with remaining on daylight saving time or standard time permanently, which is a common challenge in the academic literature since we—as most of us as Americans, aside from a few States—have been experiencing these biannual time shifts for several decades.

As such, the intent of our study and our research is not to speak to the optimality of different policies but rather to provide evidence that you can weigh in considering the costs and benefits of alternative policies.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify to this subcommittee, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kleppe follows:]

Testimony of Tyler J. Kleppe, Ph.D., CPA
EY Associate Professor of Accounting, University of Kentucky

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade

"Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"

Chairmen Guthrie and Bilirakis, Ranking Member Pallone, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your invitation to testify at this hearing. My name is Tyler Kleppe, and I am the EY Associate Professor of Accounting at the University of Kentucky. Prior to entering academia, I worked in professional practice for several years at a public accounting firm. My research covers several topics related to capital markets and financial regulation. Of particular interest to the Subcommittee and this hearing, I have recently published coauthored research that examines the effects of daylight saving time (DST) phasing on capital market participants. I am excited to share some of the insights from this research with you today.

Before I discuss this research in detail, I want to make it clear that my testimony is based on my expertise as a researcher interested in the dynamics of U.S. capital markets. I am not an expert on the psychological or psychophysical impacts of DST phasing. That said, my initial interest in studying the effects of DST phasing on capital market participants was motivated by the considerable evidence in other disciplines indicating that DST adjustments negatively impact individuals and yield various unintended consequences, such as increased traffic and workplace accidents, atypically punitive judicial sentencing, and higher frequencies of heart attacks and brain dysfunction.[1] My research seeks to address whether these negative impacts spill over to another

[1] Hicks, R. A., Lindseth, K., & Hawkins, J. (1983). Daylight saving-time changes increase traffic accidents. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 56(1), 64-66.

important but underexplored setting—public equity markets. Understanding how DST phasing impacts U.S. financial markets is crucial for understanding the broader economic implications of DST policy and should be of interest to the Subcommittee.

My primary work in this area is titled "The Effects of Daylight Saving Time Adjustments on Investor Information Processing" and is published in *The Accounting Review*, one of the leading accounting research journals.[2] This study is coauthored with Andrew Pierce at Georgia State University, Zac Wiebe at the University of Arkansas, and Teri Yohn at Emory University. In this study, we examine the effects of "spring forward" DST advances on U.S. investors' processing of corporate earnings news. We focus on DST advances in March because these time shifts occur during the spring "earnings season," a period when many public companies disclose value-relevant earnings information to investors and other capital market stakeholders. Given our interest in understanding how DST adjustments affect investors' decision-making, this is an ideal setting to examine our research question. Using quarterly earnings announcements made by U.S. companies during the current DST regime under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (specifically, 2007 through 2018), we examine investors' price responsiveness to earnings news. Most of the time, a

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[2] Kleppe, T. J., Pierce, A. T., Wiebe, Z., & Yohn, T. L. (2024). The effects of daylight saving time adjustments on investor information processing. *The Accounting Review*, 99(2), 249-277.

company's earnings maps directly into the company's value, and, consistent with this, decades of research in accounting and finance have shown that earnings news impacts stock prices. This finding is so robust that it is a classical test of market efficiency in the capital markets literature—that is, when stock prices are less responsive to earnings news, this is viewed as evidence of reduced market efficiency.[3] Consistent with DST advances dampening the investor response to earnings news, we observe significantly lower price responsiveness for earnings announcements made in the week following a DST advance, relative to other spring earnings announcements. This finding is consistent with DST adjustments inducing cognitive impairment such that investors are slower to process information contained in earnings announcements. We also find that this effect is stronger among companies with more retail investors, which suggests that these investors may be more susceptible to the information processing costs imposed by DST advances.

Our study adds to our collective understanding of how DST adjustments impact capital market participants and highlights an economic cost of DST phasing. Market efficiency is crucial to a well-functioning financial system, and thus we view our evidence that DST advances impair the efficiency of U.S. equity markets to be meaningful and relevant to policymakers. That said, we acknowledge that we are only one of several academic studies that examine the impacts of DST phasing. Thus, I believe it is prudent to consider the evidence as a whole in making any policy decisions as opposed to focusing on any one study in isolation. Moreover, our evidence cannot speak directly to any potential changes in investor information processing costs associated with remaining on daylight time or standard time permanently, which is a common challenge in the

[3] This approach in measuring investors' price responsiveness to earnings news is well-established in the disclosure processing literature. For additional details see: Blankespoor, E., deHaan, E., & Marinovic, I. (2020). Disclosure processing costs, investors' information choice, and equity market outcomes: A review. *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 70(2-3), 101344.

academic literature since most Americans have been experiencing biannual time shifts for several decades. As such, the intent of our study is not to speak to the optimality of different DST policies but rather to provide evidence that legislators can consider in weighing the costs and benefits of alternative policies.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to testify to the Subcommittee, and I appreciate the Subcommittee's interest in this issue. I am happy to answer any questions to the best of my ability.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, sir.
The gentleman yields back.
Now we will recognize Ms. Simon for her 5 minutes.
Thank you.

STATEMENT OF LISA SIMON

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, and good morning, Ranking Member Schakowsky, Committee Chair Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone, and esteemed members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the state of international inbound travel to the United States, an industry that affects every congressional district, every urban and rural community, and thousands of small businesses across our country.

I am Lisa Simon with the International Inbound Travel Association, and our members are the tour operators, destination partners, and travel services that welcome millions of international visitors to the United States each year.

International inbound tourism is a vital American export that supports millions of jobs, strengthens local economies and small businesses, and contributes significantly to the U.S. trade balance.

I would like to first acknowledge that good things have happened and are happening this year in support of international tourism, none the least of which is the recognition and support of the mega events that are coming to the U.S. in the next several years, starting with the FIFA World Cup next year and the Olympics and Paralympics in 2028 and 2034.

We commend Congress and the administration for taking tourism issues seriously. However, we have other big issues that are negatively impacting this vital economic driver.

Today, I share the sobering reality that Ranking Member Schakowsky also mentioned: that our international inbound travel to the U.S. is in decline. Through September, international arrivals are down 3.5 percent, and we are expected to end the year with 67 million international visitors, which is down 6 percent from the 72 million in 2024.

While it varies by market, an example is Canada. Our top inbound international market is down a whopping 25 percent.

At the beginning of the year, projections indicated we would reach prepandemic visitor levels by the end of 2026. That recovery has now been pushed out to 2029.

Since 2019, the U.S. has gone from a $54 billion travel trade surplus to a projected deficit of nearly $60 billion this year.

The rest of the world has been growing international visitation faster than the United States, reducing our market share of global international travelers. In fact, the United States is the only major country in the world that is predicted to decline in international visitor spending in 2025.

While there are many contributors, many of the biggest deterrents come from recent policy changes, some of which that have gone into effect, others that have been proposed.

First, steep fee increases for international visitors that are building on the already high cost of visiting the United States. We are an expensive destination.

From the One Big Beautiful Bill there is a proposed $250 visa integrity fee on top of the existing $185 visa application fee which, if implemented, would result in the U.S. having the second-highest visa cost in the world.

Entry fees for travelers from visa waiver countries and those entering at land borders have doubled and increased fivefold, respectively.

And a recent Executive order directs higher entrance fees for international visitors to national parks, coupled with a bicameral bill, the PATRIOT Parks Act, that would codify this international visitor surcharge.

This particular policy we believe would have serious consequences beyond cost. Imagine the long lines and delayed entry for visitors, including Americans, as the parks check the IDs of every visitor.

Second, several issues are causing economic uncertainty and eroding consumer confidence, like stricter border and immigration policies, tariffs, and geopolitical relations overall.

The Government shutdown definitely impacted, and I should note that this shutdown cost $5.5 billion in travel revenue.

Long visa appointment wait times. I should also mention that. As an aside, we were very happy to see the President's action this week to create a World Cup pass to guarantee visa appointments for ticket holders and an addition of 400 consular officers. That will definitely ease the pressure.

Finally, the funding cut to Brand USA. Brand USA, as mentioned, is funded by private-sector contributions and fees paid by international visitors from visa waiver countries. No American tax dollars are used to fund Brand USA.

The One Big Beautiful Bill cut Brand USA's funding by 80 percent at a time when we need to be in front of the world with a unified welcoming message.

We respectfully urge Congress to ensure a welcoming, seamless, and efficient entry process for international visitors. Reject policies that single out international visitors, including the PATRIOT Parks Act and the $250 visa integrity fee. Streamline visa processing and expand visa waiver programs. Support Chairman Bilirakis' bill, the VISIT USA Act announced yesterday—and again thank you, Chairman—to restore full funding for Brand USA for the next 2 years. And then reauthorize Brand USA in 2027.

In closing, we cannot afford to lose any more ground in one of our most important export industries that supports our communities, American workers, and our national economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Simon follows:]

Testimony Before the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing & Trade

Hearing: Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism

Lisa Simon
CEO & Executive Director
International Inbound Travel Association (IITA)
November 18, 2025

Summary of Key Points: Decline of International Inbound Travel to the United States

International inbound travel is a vital American export industry that supports millions of jobs, strengthens local economies, and contributes significantly to the U.S. trade balance. Yet today, this industry—present in every congressional district—is in decline, and the U.S. economy is already feeling the effects.

This testimony will share key factors contributing to the current state of Inbound Travel, including:

- **Steep Fee Increases for International Visitors**, like a proposed $250 Visa Integrity Fee, increased entry costs, and a surcharge on international visitors to national parks
- **Policies and Uncertainty Inhibiting Entry**, including visa wait times, tariffs, stricter border security and immigration policies and hidden resort fees.
- **Funding Cut to Brand USA**, reducing the country's destination marketing by 80%

It will emphasize the economic consequences resulting from the decline in international travel and propose ways in which Congress can address the issues, including:

- **Ensure a welcoming, seamless entry experience**
- **Reject policies that single out international visitors**
- **Expand the Visa Waiver Program**
- **Fund and Reauthorize Brand USA**
- **Fund the Assistant Secretary of Tourism position**

IITA Testimony: The State of U.S. Inbound Travel

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the state of international inbound travel to the United States – an industry that affects every congressional district, every urban and rural community, and thousands of small businesses across our country.

Introduction

I'm Lisa Simon, CEO and Executive Director of the **International Inbound Travel Association**, which is a non-partisan trade association representing the U.S. inbound travel industry. Our members are the tour operators, destination partners, attractions, hotels, transportation companies, restaurants, retail and other small businesses that welcome millions of international visitors to the United States each year.

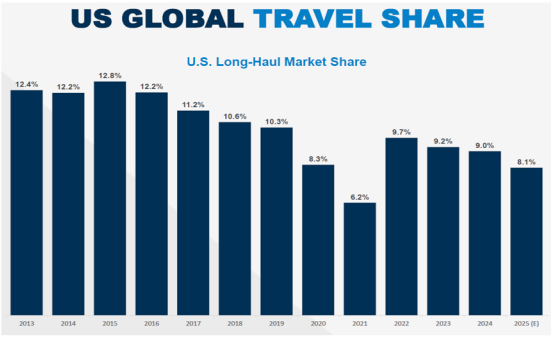
U.S. inbound tour operators, working with the international travel trade, deliver nearly 30% of the total international visitation to the United States, according to the Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office.

International inbound travel is one of America's quiet but powerful economic engines. It's a **major U.S. service export**, supporting more than **three million jobs** across various industries such as lodging, dining, entertainment, hospitality and transportation. International visitors spend heavily, creating a ripple effect that boosts employment and the overall economy.

Today, I must share a sobering reality: International inbound travel to the United States is declining, and the U.S. economy is already feeling the consequences.

State of Inbound Travel

The United States' share of global international travel has been declining for years. Despite the fact that pre-pandemic, international visitor numbers were increasing annually, the rest of the world was growing faster due to substantial government investments, thus reducing our market share of international travelers.



Source: Oxford Economics

In 2019, before the pandemic, the United States welcomed 79 million international visitors who spent nearly $180 billion across the country. In 2024, we came close to recovery with 72 million visitors, and projections at year end 2024 were that we would reach pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2026. That **recovery has now been pushed out to 2029.**

	U.S. Inbound Visitors (Thousands)										
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
TOTAL VISITS	79,442	19,212	22,280	50,771	66,350	72,390	67,866	70,404	74,382	78,120	81,900
% CHANGE YEAR-OVER-YEAR		-75.8%	16.0%	127.9%	30.7%	9.1%	-6.3%	3.7%	5.6%	5.0%	4.8%
% CHANGE RELATIVE TO 2019		24%	28%	64%	84%	91%	85%	89%	94%	98%	103%

FORECAST

Source: Oxford Economics

Current Situation. Projections by Tourism Economics/Oxford Economics for 2025 show only **67 million international visitors spending $173 billion**. That is a **nearly 10% year-over-year decline** in travel exports.

Through September, **overseas arrivals to the U.S. are down 3.5%**. While it varies by market, **Canada** — our top inbound market — **is down 25%,** representing billions in lost revenue.

Customs and Border Protection data reinforces the trend: international visitation in September was down 8% year-over-year, an even steeper decline than in recent months.



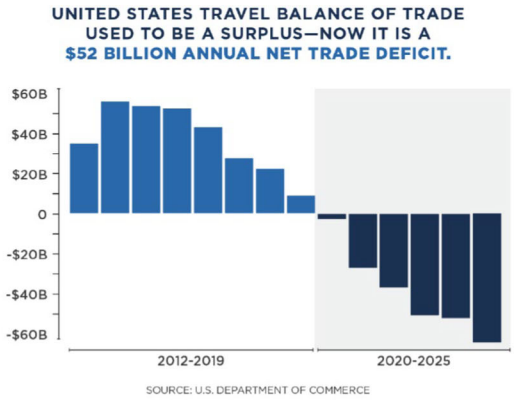
To put this into perspective, the average **overseas visitor spends $4,000 per trip**. **Every 1% drop** in international visitor spending **costs the U.S. economy $1.8 billion in lost export revenue.**

Economic Consequences

These declines are not abstract; they have real impacts on American workers and businesses.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the **U.S. is on track to lose at least $21 billion** in international travel spending in 2025.

Since 2019, the **U.S. has gone from a $54 billion travel trade surplus to a projected deficit of about $60 billion this year**. And we are now predicted to **be the only major country in the world facing a decline** in international visitor spending in 2025.



These losses hit hardest at the local level. Inbound travel dollars reach far beyond typical tourism centers. Every single congressional district benefits from international visitation, and every district feels these losses.

What's Driving the Decline

While there are many contributors, this downturn is not simply the result of global economic pressures; many of the biggest deterrents come from our own policies. Several U.S. policy choices — some which have gone into effect and others that are proposed — are creating barriers that deter inbound travel.

First, steep fee increases are creating sticker shock and can disincentivize travel to the U.S. The One Big Beautiful Bill included increases to several fees for international travelers to visit the United States.

- There is a **proposed $250 Visa Integrity Fee**, on top of the existing $185 visa application fee, which, if implemented, would result in the **U.S. having the second-highest visa cost in the world**.



- Electronic System of Travel Authorization (ESTA) fees for Visa Waiver Program travelers recently **increased from $21 to $40**.
- I-94 fees for international travelers entering at land borders **increased from $6 to $30.**
- Not included in the bill, but a recent Executive Order directs **higher entrance fees for international visitors to national parks**, and a bicameral bill—the PATRIOT Parks Act—being considered would **codify an international-visitor surcharge**.

These costs place the **U.S. out of alignment with competitor destinations**, many of which have moved in the opposite direction making it easier and less expensive to visit their countries. They give the impression that we simply don't want foreign visitors in the U.S.

Second, policies and uncertainty are inhibiting entry.

Uncertainty and fear are leading to international travelers' hesitation to travel to the United States.

- **Long visa-appointment wait times,** inconsistent interview procedures, stricter border policies reduce demand and undermine confidence.

  We applaud the recently announced FIFA World Cup pass that would essentially guarantee ticket holders timely visa interview appointments and the addition of 400+ consular officers to ensure seamless processing.

- **Tariffs** have caused anxiety in markets with fears of unpredictable costs.

- **Government shutdowns**, and even threats of shutdowns, disrupt aviation staffing, create operational delays, and cost the U.S. billions. It's important to note that the Government shutdown has taken a toll on the economy and the travel infrastructure, **costing the travel economy $1 billion for every week** the government was closed.
  This shutdown cost $5.5 billion in travel revenue.
- **Unexpected resort fees and other forms of drip pricing** create uncertainty for international visitors and undermine the overall U.S. destination experience. These hidden charges complicate trip planning and weaken trust in the U.S. travel marketplace as they are not common in most international markets.

  Congress has made solid progress toward fixing this. Senate Bill S.314, now awaiting floor action, would require clear upfront disclosure of all mandatory fees—an important structural step that aligns U.S. practices with international expectations and strengthens our competitiveness as a destination.

Finally, the funding cut to Brand USA. Brand USA is our country's highly effective destination marketing organization charged with promoting the U.S., which has dramatically impacted the industry's ability to compete internationally.

Brand USA is a public/private partnership funded by private sector contributions and fees paid by international visitors from Visa Waiver Program countries (42) via the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). **No American taxpayer dollars are used to fund Brand USA.**

The One Big Beautiful Bill **cut Brand USA's funding by 80%,** at a time when we need to be in front of the world with a unified welcoming message to rebuild lost business and ensure we have successful mega-events that we're hosting in the next several years, starting with the FIFA World Cup and the Route 66 Centennial next year and the Olympics and Paralympics in 2028 and 2034.

According to U.S. Travel Association, these cuts to Brand USA could lead to a loss of:

- **$ 7.5 billion in visitor spending** on American products and services

- **$2.1 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue**
- Enough spending to support **100,000 American jobs**

We strongly support Chairman Bilirakis and Rep. Castor's recently announced legislation to restore full funding for Brand USA leading up to the biggest couple years for travel for our country.

International **consumer perception is being driven by extensive global media coverage** of detainments and disruptions at the border, the crackdown on immigration and images of raids in cities and rural areas, and overall unwelcoming rhetoric and images. We need Brand USA more than ever to actively counter these misperceptions and driving demand in our key source markets.

Why It Matters

Inbound travel is a vital export. It **strengthens the U.S. trade balance, supports millions of American jobs, and sustains businesses of every size**—from rural communities to major metropolitan centers.

- The **spending from international visitors directly supports over 3 million U.S. jobs.** Job creation is not limited to just hotels and airlines. International visitor spending has a **broad ripple effect,** supporting employment in numerous related sectors, including food services, entertainment, retail, transportation, advertising, real estate, and even healthcare and education services.

  If the current downward trends continue, the U**.S. risks losing billions in travel export** revenue and potentially **over 230,000 jobs**.
- U.S. inbound travel is **facing stronger competition globally**. Forecast commentary mentions that while other destinations reduce barriers – lowering fees and implementing visa waivers, the U.S. is facing increased friction.

- The data signal that inbound travel is not simply still in "recovery mode", but in fact sliding backward in 2025. This elevates the **urgency for policy, marketing, and structural fixes**.
- With major global events on the horizon (e.g., the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the U.S., the 2028 and 2034 Olympics etc.), failing to stabilize inbound travel business now means the U.S. will miss a window of opportunity that spotlights the uniqueness of our great country driving demand for years to come.

What We Ask of Congress

We respectfully urge Congress to:

- **Ensure a welcoming, seamless entry process** for international visitors.
- **Reject policies that single out international visitors**, including the PATRIOT Parks Act requiring an entrance-fee surcharge at national parks.
- **Improve entry and exit efficiency**, including staffing, infrastructure, and technology modernization.
- **Streamline visa processing** and broaden interview waivers where appropriate.
- **Expand the Visa Waiver Program**, giving more countries secure, streamlined access to visit the U.S.
- **Support Chairman Bilirakis' bill to restore full funding for Brand USA,** that is $160 million in surplus funds from the Travel Promotion Fund over the next two years at no burden to U.S. tax payers.
- **Reauthorize Brand USA in 2027.** Brand USA's current authorization will expire at the end of FY27.
- **Fund the Assistant Secretary of Tourism** position, which was established by the Visit America Act.

Closing

Inbound travel strengthens America—economically, culturally, and diplomatically. When visitors come here, they spend money in our communities, support American workers, and contribute to our national prosperity.

We cannot afford to lose ground in one of our most important export industries, especially when many of the barriers are within our control to fix.

Please find some additional graphics below and note that our primary data sources are the National Travel and Tourism Office, Tourism Economics/Oxford Economics, U.S. Travel Association and Brand USA.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

2025 INTERNATIONAL VISITATION FORECAST

Outlook amongst the top 10 markets is mixed.

Top 10 Markets	2024 Actual	2025 Forecast	YOY % Change
Mexico	16,989,950	17,919,500	+5%
Canada	20,241,120	15,746,260	-22%
United Kingdom	4,037,120	4,094,156	+1%
India	2,190,345	2,074,306	-5%
Japan	1,843,880	1,937,379	+5%
Brazil	1,910,260	1,933,037	+1%
Germany	1,994,790	1,782,281	-11%
France	1,706,080	1,592,392	-7%
China	1,625,960	1,555,350	-4%
South Korea	1,700,120	1,535,303	-10%
Total Top 10	**54,241,649**	**50,171,989**	**-8%**
TOTAL INTERNATIONAL	**72,390,320**	**67,865,690**	**-6%**

Source: Tourism Economics, October 2025

2025 INTERNATIONAL VISITATION FORECAST EVOLUTION

Tourism Economics' 2025 visitation outlook has evolved significantly over the past 12 months:

- December 2024: 78.8M (+9% YOY)
- March 2025: 65.6M (-9% YOY)
- October 2025: 67.9M (-6% YOY)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce/NTTO, September 2025; Tourism Economics, October 2025, forecast in millions

Mr. BILIRAKIS. We appreciate it very much.
Now we will hear from Mr. Karen.
You are recognized for your 5 minutes of testimony.
Mr. KAREN. Good morning.
Mr. BILIRAKIS. Good morning.

STATEMENT OF JAY KAREN

Mr. KAREN. Members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity. I am Jay Karen, CEO of the National Golf Course Owners Association, representing 4,000 golf courses nationwide: public, private, resort, municipal facilities. Basically, if it has a flag stick, we take a stake in it.

I also serve on the leadership committee of the American Golf Industry Coalition and on the board of directors at the U.S. Travel Association.

Many people think of golf as just a game until they really understand the impact behind it. Golf is a $102 billion industry employing nearly 2 million Americans and a game played outdoors by 30 million Americans.

What many don't realize is that 75 percent of courses in America are public access. We generate $40 billion in tourism annually and raise $5 billion for charities through golf outings, more than all sports combined. And I understand golf outings can be effective fundraisers for political campaigns as well.

Golf is a public health and environmental asset. It is outdoor recreation, green space, wildlife habitat, and exercise all in one.

So about daylight saving time. Let me be direct. The golf industry strongly opposes making standard time permanent. Our data shows that permanent standard time would cost the industry, at a bare minimum, $1.6 billion annually in green fees alone, not counting cart rentals, food, beverage, or merchandise. That is approximately $200,000 lost in revenue per golf course and 37 million lost rounds of golf.

Why is that? Golf depends on what we call recreational daylight, when the sunlight overlaps with people's availability to be outdoors. Americans overwhelmingly prefer afternoon and evening recreation. Our point-of-sale data shows afternoon and evening hours generate 40 percent more revenue per hour than the morning play.

Permanent standard time would trade 6 p.m. for 6 a.m., eliminating our most valuable inventory while adding demand at hours nobody wants. And I can tell you from experience, except for maybe Bethpage Black, where the Ryder Cup was just played, Americans are not lining up at 5 a.m. for tee times.

Our industry has diverse views on making daylight saving time permanent, though. Surveys show that about 64 percent of our members support permanent daylight saving time while 83 percent agree, though, that it would help their businesses; 27 percent prefer changing the clocks twice yearly, the status quo; and only 7 percent support making permanent standard time.

So permanent standard time would devastate evening leagues, after-work play, after-school play, charity fundraising events, and seasonal employment.

Beyond golf's economic interests, extending evening daylight supports public health, combating obesity, supporting youth sports, and enhancing public safety through reduced crime rates. If we eliminate changing the clocks, we urge permanent daylight saving time.

Now, turning to travel and tourism, America is losing ground internationally. We have heard that. The U.S. is the only major country projected to see declining international visitor spending in 2025. Cost and perception issues are major barriers, the strong dollar through 2024. Visa wait times can average 175 days in top markets. And now the visa integrity fee.

This comes at the worst possible time. In the next 4 years we will host all of these wonderful events and expect to draw 40 million international visitors, but only if we strengthen our competitiveness.

Inside of travel, golf represents an underutilized asset. Our $40 billion in annual golf tourism makes us the second-largest economic driver in the sport. International golf travelers are exceptionally high-value visitors, spending $3,000 per trip versus $1,600 for domestic travelers, staying six nights versus 3½ nights, and filling shoulder seasons when beach and ski destinations struggle.

The U.S. has the best golf tourism product in the world, and we are dramatically outmarketed by Scotland, Ireland, Spain, and emerging destinations in the Middle East and Asia.

The urgent priority is to restore Brand USA's full funding. Congress cut it by 80 percent. Brand USA represents, as we know, or operates through ESTA fees and private industry contributions, not taxpayer dollars, and generates a 24-to-1 return on that investment.

At current funding levels, we cannot compete with countries spending 40 to 50 million dollars annually marketing their destinations.

So we strongly support bipartisan legislation, led by Chairman Bilirakis, Representative Castor, along with Senators Sullivan, Klobuchar, Capito, and Rosen, to restore full funding in fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

Following funding restoration, Brand USA should be reauthorized beyond fiscal year 2027, and, of course, with specific direction to position golf as a signature American tourism experience.

In conclusion here, daylight and tourism policy may seem unrelated, but if we get this right, Americans stay active, communities thrive, and the U.S. remains a premier destination.

Thank you for inviting me to share this perspective.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Karen follows:]

NGCOA
NATIONAL GOLF COURSE OWNERS ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF JAY KAREN

Chief Executive Officer

National Golf Course Owners Association of America

Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing: "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"

November 20, 2025

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the National Golf Course Owners Association of America. My name is Jay Karen, Chief Executive Officer of NGCOA, headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina. We represent over 4,000 golf facilities throughout the United States, including privately-owned public courses, private clubs, municipal courses, and resorts.

I also serve on the leadership committee of the American Golf Industry Coalition, which brings together organizations representing golf facility owners, superintendents, the PGA of America, club managers, and the USGA. Additionally, I serve on the Board of Directors of the U.S. Travel Association, which provides me with a broader perspective on the critical intersection between tourism policy and economic development nationwide. These roles have shown me firsthand that even within our industry, there are diverse views on some of the issues before you today, particularly regarding daylight saving time.

THE GOLF INDUSTRY'S ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

Many elected officials see golf as simply a game until it becomes relevant to discussions about taxes, land use, water management, employment, tourism, and local economic development. What comes into view is a $102 billion industry employing nearly 2 million people across 15,000 facilities and 2 million acres of land—approximately the combined size of Delaware and Rhode Island.

Key facts about the golf industry:

- **28.1 million Americans** played golf in 2024 on over 15,000 golf courses across the United States
- **Nearly 80% of golf courses** are public access facilities, not private country clubs
- **$102 billion** in economic activity in 2022, representing a 20% increase over 2016
- **$226 billion** in extended economic impact
- **1.65 million Americans** employed directly and indirectly by the golf industry
- **$5 billion** raised annually through nearly 150,000 charitable golf events at more than 80% of all facilities

Golf's impact extends beyond recreation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans discovered golf for the first time as one of the few outdoor activities available for families seeking safe recreation. Golf facilities provide valuable green space—trees and turfgrass improve air quality by producing oxygen and trapping pollutants before they reach groundwater supplies. U.S. golf courses serve as sanctuaries for wildlife while demonstrating dramatic environmental improvements, including a 29% reduction in water usage since 2005.

Golf delivers measurable health benefits. A typical 18-hole round involves walking 4-6 miles and burning up to 2,000 calories. Studies show golfers have a 40% lower mortality rate than non-golfers of the same age. The sport supports mental wellness, particularly for adults aged 35-49, who report using golf to reduce stress. In 2022, 97% of U.S. golf facilities hosted programs to expand recreational access, underscoring golf's role as a community wellness asset combining exercise, nature, and social connection into a sustainable lifelong activity.

SECTION I: DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME

Understanding "Locking the Clock"

"Locking the clock" does not change the amount of daylight available; it simply changes where that daylight appears on our clocks. For golf and outdoor recreation generally, this shift has profound economic, operational, and public health implications.

The Concept of Recreational Daylight

Golf facilities depend on what we call "Recreational Daylight"—the overlap of sunlight and people's availability to be outdoors. Historically, Americans overwhelmingly prefer pursuing recreation and outdoor activities in "after-dinner" hours rather than "before-breakfast" daylight. This preference extends beyond golf to soccer, jogging, walking, biking, tennis, pickleball, and virtually all outdoor recreational activities.

How Daylight Hours Shape Golf Operations

A golf course operator's day revolves entirely around available sunlight. Operations start before dawn, with superintendents coordinating maintenance crews and preparing the course before the first tee times. Sunrise determines when play can safely begin. As players arrive, operators oversee pace of play, manage food and beverage service, and handle midday office tasks and course checks. Afternoons shift toward twilight play and evening event planning, with closing duties focused on cart returns and preparing for the next day.

Tee times are scheduled based strictly on available daylight, with early starts shortly after sunrise and final rounds finishing at sunset. Some premier facilities, like Pebble Beach Golf Links, even install lights in trees on the finishing green to accommodate golfers trying to complete their rounds in fading light. Seasonal shifts in daylight directly affect how many rounds can be played, staffing requirements, event timing, maintenance windows, and twilight pricing strategies. In short, daylight hours form the framework for nearly every operational and financial decision, impacting both guest experience and the bottom line.

Seasonal and Geographic Considerations

Seasonal changes in sunrise, sunset, and weather conditions—particularly frost—significantly impact daily operations. In winter, even if sunrise occurs at 7:30 AM, play may be delayed until 9:00 AM or later due to frost, which damages turf if disturbed. This reduces playable hours and limits tee time availability, often requiring operators to start later, compress tee sheets, and reduce staffing.

Summer offers long days with early sunrises and late sunsets, allowing more tee times, twilight play, and higher revenue potential. Maintenance crews must adjust seasonally, often starting before first light in summer while winter operations compress into tighter windows. Event planning, food and beverage hours, and dynamic pricing models all adapt to seasonal light and weather patterns.

Geographic latitude matters substantially. At the June summer solstice, daylight length varies dramatically:

- **Miami, FL** (benchmark): 13 hours 45 minutes of daylight
- **Minneapolis, MN**: 15 hours 37 minutes (almost 2 hours more)
- **Seattle, WA**: 15 hours 59 minutes (+2 hours)
- **Sioux Falls, SD**: 15 hours 36 minutes (+2 hours)
- **East Lansing, MI**: 15 hours 21 minutes (+1.5 hours)
- **Buffalo, NY**: 15 hours 21 minutes (+1.5 hours)
- **Boston, MA**: 15 hours 17 minutes (+1.5 hours)

In a formula adjusting for weather patterns, a Minneapolis course has capacity for 50+ more golfers per day than a Miami course on the same summer date. This capacity advantage continues through the autumnal equinox in September. Northern courses benefit from annual daylight distribution naturally, which partly explains why golf participation rates are significantly higher in northern versus southern states.

Revenue Distribution Throughout the Day

Golf courses generate substantially higher revenue in late-day versus early-morning hours. Analysis of Point of Sale data across diverse facilities reveals that **afternoon and evening daylight revenue is approximately 40% higher than before-lunch hours** for the average golf facility.

This revenue differential exists because:

- Working professionals play after work, not before dawn
- Twilight rates still generate substantial revenue per round
- Evening play drives food and beverage sales
- After-work leagues represent high-volume, consistent business
- Group outings and events schedule for afternoon/evening times

Hence, eliminating evening daylight through permanent Standard Time would cost the average operator approximately 7-8% of annual revenue by removing the most valuable inventory.

Economic Impact Analysis

The following analysis examines approximately 8,000 public, regulation-length golf courses in the United States. This economic picture includes only green fee revenue gains or losses, and does not account for impacts on golf cart rentals, merchandise, food and beverage, golf lessons, and other business areas. Additionally, these figures exclude thousands of private clubs, which would amplify the impacts in both directions by an enormous sum.

Metric	Permanent Standard Time	Permanent Daylight Saving Time
Public Regulation Courses Affected	8,000	8,000
Hours per week lost/gained	-7	+7 (Nov-Mar)
Weeks impacted annually	34	20
Capacity rounds per hour	28	28
Total capacity rounds impact	-53,000,000	+32,000,000
Likely utilization factor	70%	70%
Actual rounds lost/gained	**-37,000,000**	**+23,000,000**
% of Annual U.S. Total	**-7.0%**	**+4.3%**
Green Fee Revenue Impact	**-$1.665 billion**	**+$1.035 billion**
Average impact per course	**-$200,000**	**+$250,000**

Permanent Standard Time would shift one hour per day from recreational to non-recreational daylight—essentially trading 8 PM for 8 AM. Americans do not play golf at 8 AM in the volume they play at 8 PM. This would:

- Eliminate approximately 37 million rounds of golf annually
- Cost the industry at least $1.6 billion in green fee revenue alone
- Reduce annual revenue by 7-8% per facility
- Result in significant job losses during peak employment seasons
- Devastate evening leagues, after-work play, and fundraising events
- Disproportionately harm working golfers who depend on evening access

Permanent Daylight Saving Time would provide additional recreational daylight from November through March, which would:

- Add an estimated 23 million rounds to current golf inventory
- Generate approximately $1 billion in additional green fee revenue
- Provide a tailwind of roughly $250,000 per affected facility
- Extend playing seasons in temperate climates
- Increase employment during shoulder seasons

Important distinction: Northern facilities would benefit less from permanent DST because November-March represents non-season months due to snow and temperature. However, these months represent peak season for "snowbird" locations including Florida, Arizona, Southern California, and the Carolinas, where the economic impact would be most pronounced.

Current Status Quo (changing clocks twice yearly) avoids the significant downside while forfeiting the moderate upside.

Industry Sentiment: A Nuanced Picture

Through extensive member surveys, the NGCOA has documented diverse opinions within our industry on this complex issue:

Industry-Wide Sentiment:

- **64% support** making Daylight Saving Time permanent
- **27% support** keeping the current system of changing clocks twice yearly
- **7% support** making Standard Time permanent
- **2% unsure**

Notably, 83% of NGCOA members feel a permanent change to Daylight Saving Time would benefit the overall success and viability of their businesses, yet only 64% support actually making the change. This 19-percentage-point gap likely represents operators who acknowledge the business benefit but question whether the change and related disruptions to business operations and daily life justify the gain.

Why Some Operators Prefer the Status Quo:

Approximately one-quarter to one-third of our members prefer maintaining the current system of changing clocks. Their reasoning includes:

- Golf courses in areas that close or significantly slow down during winter months see limited benefit from November-March evening daylight they cannot utilize
- Some facilities enjoy giving employees relief with earlier sunset times during slower winter months, supporting workplace culture and work-life balance
- Resort operations with strong morning play from vacationers may value morning inventory more than evening
- Established customer patterns around existing tee times create resistance to operational changes
- Uncertainty about whether customers would adjust behaviors to match new daylight patterns

Why Very Few Support Permanent Standard Time:

Only 7-9% of operators favor permanent Standard Time. Even those who run morning-heavy businesses recognize that permanent Standard Time would eliminate their most valuable late-afternoon and evening inventory without generating offsetting morning demand. Early-morning golfers represent lower revenue per round, and pushing sunrise back an hour does not create new demand at 4:00-5:00 AM tee times.

Superintendent Perspectives: Operational Complexity

Golf course superintendents—the professionals responsible for course maintenance and agronomic quality—report more mixed views than facility operators, illustrating the operational complexity of this issue:

- **40% feel** permanent DST would benefit the success and viability of their work
- **33% unsure** about the impact
- **27% believe** it would not be helpful

Superintendent concerns about permanent Daylight Saving Time include:

Morning Operations and Safety: Course maintenance must be completed before first tee times. Superintendents and grounds crews would face extended periods of darkness for essential tasks including mowing, irrigation system checks, fertilizer application, and course setup. This raises safety concerns for employees working in darkness and potential impacts on the agronomic quality customers expect.

Frost Management: In northern states, morning frost already delays tee times even with current daylight patterns. Permanent DST would push sunrise back an hour, potentially extending frost delays and compressing playable windows during shoulder seasons.

Noise Ordinances: Many facilities operate under local noise ordinances restricting early-morning equipment use. Permanent DST might force maintenance crews to start even earlier to complete work before play begins, potentially conflicting with municipal regulations designed to protect residential areas.

Crew Scheduling and Labor Costs: Extended early-morning darkness work might require shift differential pay or additional safety measures, increasing operational expenses. In winter months at northern latitudes, permanent DST could mean maintenance crews working in darkness for several hours.

Work-Life Balance: Year-round golf facilities in temperate climates already require staff to work long hours during peak seasons. Some superintendents value the earlier sunset times that current Standard Time provides during winter months, allowing employees more evening time with families.

In contrast, only 19% of superintendents feel permanent Standard Time would benefit their operations, with 46% saying it would not be helpful and 35% unsure.

Geographic and Business Model Variations

The diversity of opinions within our industry reflects genuine differences in business models and geographic situations:

Northern Seasonal Courses: Facilities that close November-March see limited upside from permanent DST but significant downside from permanent Standard Time during their April-October operating season.

Sunbelt Resort Destinations: Florida, Arizona, and Southern California facilities operate year-round with peak winter seasons. For these businesses, permanent DST's November-March evening daylight would be most valuable, while permanent Standard Time would be most harmful.

Municipal vs. Private Operations: Municipal courses often serve working-class golfers who play after work. Private clubs may have more flexible membership demographics with greater morning availability.

Daily-Fee vs. Resort Models: Daily-fee courses depend heavily on after-work play and twilight rounds. Resort courses hosting destination travelers may see stronger morning rounds from vacationers.

The Industry's Clear Position

Despite this internal diversity of opinion, **the golf industry is unequivocally and strongly opposed to making Standard Time permanent**. The economic analysis is clear: permanent Standard Time would cost our industry $1.6 billion annually, eliminate 37 million rounds of golf, result in widespread job losses, and reduce recreational access for millions of working Americans.

The NGCOA does not take a formal position on whether Congress should make Daylight Saving Time permanent, because a substantial portion of our members prefer the status quo of changing

clocks twice yearly. However, if Congress determines that eliminating clock changes serves the national interest, we urge permanent Daylight Saving Time over permanent Standard Time.

Public Health and Broader Recreational Considerations

This issue extends far beyond golf's economic interests. Extended evening daylight supports public health goals that benefit all Americans:

Physical Activity: Outdoor recreation—whether golf, soccer, jogging, walking, or biking—overwhelmingly occurs in afternoon and evening hours. Reducing evening daylight would decrease physical activity participation precisely when public health officials emphasize combating sedentary lifestyles and obesity.

Mental Health: The biological benefits of sunlight include Vitamin D production, improved immune function, bone health, and positive mental health outcomes. Evening sunlight exposure supports circadian rhythm regulation and mental wellness.

Public Safety: Ample research correlates increased evening daylight with reduced crime rates. Hikers, joggers, and cyclists face greater safety risks with earlier sunsets, which may also discourage participation entirely.

Youth Sports and Activities: After-school sports programs, youth leagues, and family outdoor activities depend on evening daylight. Permanent Standard Time would push sunset back an hour during spring, summer, and fall—the very seasons when youth outdoor programming peaks.

Economic Ripple Effects: The impacts extend beyond golf to restaurants, retailers, hospitality businesses, and service industries that depend on discretionary consumer spending during evening hours when people are active and outdoors.

Recommendation on Daylight Saving Time

We ask this Subcommittee to carefully consider the economic and public health consequences of reducing evening recreational daylight. If Congress moves toward eliminating clock changes, we strongly encourage permanent Daylight Saving Time over permanent Standard Time. At minimum, we urge the Subcommittee to avoid the severe negative consequences that permanent Standard Time would impose on outdoor recreation, local economies, and public health.

SECTION II: TRAVEL AND TOURISM TO THE UNITED STATES AND GOLF'S PART IN THE PICTURE

Zooming Out: The State of Travel

Travel and tourism remain powerful engines of the U.S. economy. The industry generates **$2.9 trillion in annual economic output**, supports **15 million American jobs**, and produces **$190 billion in tax revenue**. Leisure travel continues to anchor the sector—responsible for **$1 trillion in spending** last year and **82% of all domestic trips**—while business travel added another **$312 billion**.

International inbound travel, however, is where America is losing ground. Visitors contributed **$181 billion** last year, but overall volume remains well below 2019 levels. In just over a decade, the U.S. has fallen from a **$50 billion travel trade surplus** to a projected **$60+ billion deficit in 2025**, driven largely by the failure to regain pre-pandemic international visitation.

Domestic travel remains stable. U.S. trips are projected to rise **1.9% in 2025**, and more than **90% of Americans** say they plan to travel in the next six months. Air travel set records over summer and during Labor Day. Yet visits to National Parks lag—**9.1 million trips below last year** prior to the shutdown, which further disrupted visitation and gateway-community economies.

The international picture is more troubling. Through August, inbound visitation is down **4.8%**—driven by a **23% drop from Canada** (nearly **4 million fewer trips and $4 billion in lost spending**). Mexico is up **11%**, but major overseas markets remain soft. Overseas visitors spend an average of **$4,000 per trip**, nearly four times more than domestic travelers, meaning every **1% decline costs the U.S. $1.8 billion** in export revenue. The U.S. is the **only major country projected to see a decline** in international visitor spending in 2025.

Cost and perception issues are major barriers. The strong dollar, high airfare, and now the new **$250 Visa Integrity Fee** make the U.S. one of the most expensive destinations in the world for visa-requiring travelers—likely deterring **nearly 1 million annual visits**. Visa interview wait times in top markets average **175 days**, and the U.S. counts only **42 countries** in its Visa Waiver Program, compared to the U.K.'s 102. These challenges reinforce a perception that the U.S. is unwelcoming and difficult to visit.

These obstacles come at exactly the wrong time. In the next four years, the U.S. will host **America250**, the **2026 FIFA World Cup**, the **2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games**, and other global events expected to draw **up to 40 million international visitors** and nearly **$100 billion in economic activity**—but only if we strengthen our competitiveness.

The Administration has taken important steps: launching a White House World Cup Task Force; increasing State Department visa-processing capacity; funding **5,000 additional CBP officers**; modernizing TSA screening; expanding one-stop security; and proposing full funding for Brand USA in FY26.

Congress has an equally important role. The recent shutdown alone cost more than **$6 billion in lost travel spending**, shut down federal attractions, halted data reporting, and slowed air travel—all preventable impacts. Keeping the government funded is essential to the health of the travel economy, and if a shutdown ever occurs again, essential workers such as TSA and air traffic controllers must continue to be paid.

Congress must also restore full funding for **Brand USA**, the nation's public–private international marketing arm. Funded entirely by industry contributions and ESTA fees—not taxpayer dollars—Brand USA generates a **24:1 return on investment**, supports nearly **80,000 jobs**, and is critical for communicating official U.S. entry policies abroad. Cuts under the One Big Beautiful Bill—from $100 million to $20 million in annual federal matching funds—risk at least **$7.5 billion in lost visitor spending** and **100,000 American jobs** over the coming years. Bipartisan legislation led by Chairman Bilirakis and Rep. Castor would restore its funding and ensure international promotion ahead of our major events.

Finally, Congress should reconsider the Visa Integrity Fee or limit its use to countries with high overstay risks. At the statutory minimum of $250, this fee will mean **nearly 1 million fewer annual visitors**, **$2.9 billion in lost spending**, **15,000 lost jobs**, and **over $400 million in lost tax revenue** in the first year alone.

Strengthening our visa system, restoring Brand USA, investing in air travel modernization, fully staffing National Parks, and keeping government open are necessary steps to ensure the United States remains the world's premier travel destination—especially as we prepare to host the largest gatherings of visitors on American soil in a generation.

Zooming In on Golf

Golf represents a critical and significantly underappreciated component of America's tourism economy and competitive position in the global travel market.

Golf Tourism's Economic Impact

Golf tourism is the second-largest economic driver in the golf industry, generating over $40 billion in annual travel-related expenditures within the United States. This represents a substantial portion of the industry's overall $102 billion economic footprint.

Golf travelers represent exceptionally high-value visitors who generate disproportionate economic impact:

Extended Stays: Golf travelers book longer trips than general tourists, averaging 3-5 nights compared to 2-3 nights for typical leisure travel.

Group Travel Patterns: Golf trips typically involve groups of 4-12 travelers, multiplying local economic impact through lodging, dining, retail, entertainment, and transportation spending.

Shoulder Season Concentration: Golf destinations attract visitors during spring and fall shoulder seasons when other tourism sectors experience softness. This provides economic stability for hospitality workers and service businesses during periods when beach destinations see lower visitation and ski resorts remain closed.

Year-Round Appeal: While ski destinations face summer challenges and beach destinations see winter declines, golf destinations can attract visitors across extended seasons in temperate climates, supporting year-round employment.

High Per-Trip Spending: Beyond green fees, golf travelers spend substantially on premium lodging, fine dining, equipment and apparel purchases, spa services, and entertainment. The average golf trip generates $1,200-2,000 per person in total travel expenditures.

Regional Economic Multipliers: Golf tourism supports entire destination ecosystems. From Myrtle Beach to Scottsdale, Palm Springs to Pinehurst, Kiawah Island to Bandon Dunes, golf facilities anchor regional economies that depend on visitor spending to sustain hospitality jobs, restaurants, retail establishments, ground transportation, and service businesses.

America's Competitive Position in Global Golf Tourism

The United States faces intensifying international competition for golf tourism dollars. Traditional competitors including Scotland, Ireland, and Spain actively market golf tourism as signature destination experiences. Emerging markets in Asia, the Middle East, and other regions invest heavily in championship golf facilities and aggressive tourism marketing to capture market share.

Scotland promotes itself as "The Home of Golf" with coordinated national marketing campaigns. Ireland leverages dramatic coastal courses and cultural authenticity. Spain offers Mediterranean climate and resort experiences. Dubai and other Middle Eastern destinations provide luxury golf resort experiences with world-class facilities.

Meanwhile, the United States—despite having the world's most diverse golf landscape, from affordable municipal courses to championship resort destinations—has underinvested in international golf tourism marketing compared to these competitors. The strong U.S. dollar through 2023 and 2024 made American travel more expensive for international visitors, and while currency conditions have improved in 2025, the lag effect in international travel planning means we are still experiencing the impact of that previous dollar strength. International leisure travelers typically book major trips 6-12 months in advance, meaning current visitation reflects decisions made when the dollar was less favorable. This timing dynamic underscores why sustained, aggressive marketing is essential—we cannot simply wait for favorable economic conditions to automatically generate visitation.

Brand USA: Critical Infrastructure for Golf Tourism

Brand USA, established as a public-private partnership following the Travel Promotion Act of 2009, serves as the United States' primary tourism marketing organization to international audiences. However, Brand USA faces ongoing reauthorization and funding challenges that limit its effectiveness in promoting American tourism, including golf tourism.

Current Limitations: Brand USA's current structure and appropriations have not adequately positioned golf as a differentiating American travel experience. While competitor nations

actively market golf tourism through coordinated campaigns, American golf destinations lack the visibility in international markets that the industry's economic impact warrants.

Return on Investment: Tourism marketing generates substantial economic returns. For every federal dollar invested in tourism promotion, research demonstrates returns of $25-30 in visitor spending and associated tax revenue. Given golf's $40 billion annual tourism impact and high-value traveler profile, targeted international golf tourism marketing would produce measurable returns.

International Visitor Value: International golf travelers spend significantly more per trip than domestic visitors and travel during periods when domestic tourism is lower. European and Asian golfers view American destinations as bucket-list experiences but make travel decisions based substantially on marketing visibility and destination awareness.

Policy Recommendations for Tourism and Golf Tourism Enhancement

As a member of the U.S. Travel Association Board of Directors, I have worked extensively on tourism policy issues that affect not only golf but the broader American travel industry. I offer the following recommendations to strengthen America's competitive position in golf tourism:

1. Restore Brand USA's Full Funding for FY26-27

Congress should immediately restore Brand USA's authorized ESTA fee allocation to $100 million annually for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. The current $20 million funding level—an 80% reduction—severely undermines America's ability to compete in the global tourism market. We strongly support the bipartisan legislation advanced by Representatives Bilirakis and Castor, along with Senators Sullivan, Klobuchar, Capito, and Rosen, to achieve this restoration.

Given golf's $40 billion annual tourism impact and the demonstrated $25-30 return for every dollar invested in tourism marketing, restoring Brand USA's funding would generate substantial returns through international visitor spending. The organization's unique funding mechanism through ESTA fees and private sector contributions, rather than annual appropriations, provides stability and efficiency that should be maintained and strengthened.

2. Reauthorize Brand USA Beyond FY27

Following the restoration of full funding, Congress should reauthorize Brand USA beyond the end of fiscal year 2027 to ensure long-term stability for international tourism marketing. The reauthorization should maintain the ESTA fee funding structure and explicitly direct Brand USA to develop golf tourism as a distinct marketing category with dedicated resources.

- Championship resort courses in premiere destinations
- Historic and culturally significant golf facilities
- Accessible public golf representing American democratic values
- Unique American golf experiences (desert golf, mountain golf, coastal links-style courses)

- Integration of golf into broader destination marketing highlighting American culture, hospitality, and diverse landscapes

2. Create Golf Tourism as a Distinct Marketing Category

Brand USA should establish golf tourism as a distinct marketing category with dedicated resources, similar to how competitor nations position golf as signature tourism experiences. This includes:

- Coordinated campaigns targeting European and Asian golf travelers
- Digital marketing showcasing American golf diversity
- Partnership with state and regional tourism organizations to amplify messaging
- Integration with major American golf events (U.S. Open, PGA Championship, Ryder Cup) to leverage international media attention

4. Regional Airport Access and Transportation Infrastructure

Golf destinations in smaller markets often face limited air service, constraining visitor volume and economic potential. Many premium golf destinations lack direct international flights or convenient domestic connections, creating barriers to visitation despite world-class facilities.

Transportation policy should consider tourism access and economic impact on destination communities. Federal programs supporting regional airport improvements, essential air service, and connectivity enhancements would benefit golf destinations and the broader tourism ecosystem they support.

5. Hospitality Workforce Development

The hospitality workforce challenges facing hotels, restaurants, and attractions equally affect golf facilities. Golf operations employ professionals across diverse roles:

- Golf professionals and teaching staff
- Course superintendents and grounds crew
- Hospitality and customer service personnel
- Food and beverage staff
- Specialized positions including caddies and operations managers

Federal support for hospitality workforce training programs, seasonal employment pathways, career advancement initiatives, and apprenticeship models would strengthen the entire travel ecosystem. Golf facilities provide entry-level opportunities and career pathways that support local economies, particularly in smaller destination communities where golf serves as a primary employer.

6. Tourism Infrastructure Investment

Federal investment in tourism infrastructure provides disproportionate benefits to smaller destination communities where golf serves as an economic anchor. Priorities include:

- Broadband connectivity in resort areas to support modern traveler expectations
- Regional transportation improvements
- Wayfinding and visitor information systems
- Sustainable tourism infrastructure supporting environmental stewardship

7. Visa and Travel Facilitation

For international golf tourism to reach its potential, visa processing and travel facilitation must remain competitive with destinations competing for the same travelers. Extended visa processing times or cumbersome entry procedures create friction that benefits competitor nations with more streamlined processes. Congress should ensure resources for efficient visa processing that facilitates legitimate travel while maintaining security.

Golf's Broader Community Value

Beyond economic impact, golf facilities provide environmental and community benefits that support tourism sustainability:

Environmental Stewardship: Golf courses function as green infrastructure providing stormwater management, wildlife habitat, and temperature moderation in suburban and urban areas. The industry has reduced water usage 29% since 2005 while maintaining 2 million acres of managed green space that improves air quality and sequesters carbon.

Community Wellness Assets: Golf serves as lifestyle infrastructure supporting physical and mental wellness. The sport's health benefits, accessibility across age ranges, and social connection aspects make golf facilities valuable community resources beyond their economic contributions.

Charitable Platform: Golf facilities host charitable fundraising events generating nearly $5 billion annually, supporting local nonprofits, healthcare organizations, youth programs, and community causes.

Climate Adaptation: As climate patterns shift, golf facilities increasingly implement resilience measures including water conservation systems, drought-resistant turf varieties, and habitat preservation—environmental services that complement their recreational and economic roles.

These attributes position golf tourism as sustainable and community-beneficial economic development, contrasting with some tourism models that strain local resources or generate negative externalities.

CONCLUSIONS

The questions before this Subcommittee—concerning daylight, travel, and tourism—directly affect the golf industry's ability to serve as an economic engine and recreational resource in communities nationwide.

On Daylight Saving Time: The data is clear. Permanent Standard Time would cost our industry a minimum of $1.6 billion annually, eliminate 37 million rounds of golf, destroy seasonal employment opportunities, and reduce recreational access for millions of working Americans who depend on evening daylight for outdoor activity. While opinions within our industry vary on whether to make Daylight Saving Time permanent, there is absolute consensus opposing permanent Standard Time.

If Congress determines that eliminating clock changes serves the national interest, we strongly urge permanent Daylight Saving Time over permanent Standard Time to preserve evening recreational opportunities that benefit public health, local economies, and outdoor recreation access. At minimum, we ask the Subcommittee to carefully consider the economic and public health consequences before reducing evening recreational daylight.

On Tourism Policy: Golf represents an underutilized asset in America's competitive position in the global tourism market. The immediate priority is restoring Brand USA's full funding—from the current $20 million to $100 million annually—for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. We strongly support the bipartisan legislation led by Representatives Bilirakis and Castor, along with Senators Sullivan, Klobuchar, Capito, and Rosen, to achieve this restoration. Following funding restoration, Brand USA should be reauthorized beyond fiscal year 2027 with specific integration of golf tourism into destination marketing strategies.

The recommendations I have offered today—from Brand USA funding restoration to workforce development, regional connectivity to travel facilitation—would benefit not only golf but the entire American tourism ecosystem. Golf's $40 billion annual tourism impact and position as a year-round economic anchor in destination communities warrants strategic policy attention.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's focus on these critical issues affecting time, travel, and tourism. The golf industry stands ready to provide technical assistance, additional data, and industry expertise as you develop policy solutions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome your questions.

FOOTNOTES

[1] National Golf Foundation, "Golf Economy Report 2024" (2024).

[2] National Golf Foundation, "Golf Tourism Study" (2023).

[3] NGCOA Point of Sale Revenue Analysis (2024).

[4] National Golf Foundation, "Golf Tourism Study" (2023).

[5] Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, "Environmental Profile of U.S. Golf Courses" (2023).

[6] Journal of Aging and Physical Activity, "Golf and Health: A Systematic Review" (2020).

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Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. We appreciate it very much. And I have several golf courses, as you know, in my area. That is for sure. I am not going to mention any, because I don't want to leave anyone out.

But in any case, let's go ahead and start with the questions. I am going to recognize myself for 5 minutes.

My first question is to Ms. Maietta.

I am a strong supporter, as you know, of Brand USA, the Nation's tourism marketing arm, which in fiscal year 2024 brought an estimated $25 in visitor spending for every dollar invested. Again, no taxpayer dollars.

How important is Brand USA to America's competitiveness in attracting international travelers?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you, Chairman, for having me here and for introducing VISIT USA along with Representative Castor.

Brand USA is critical to attracting more visitors here at home. As you have heard from myself and others here, we have been losing international travelers for a number of years. We are down 24 percent over the last 5 years. We haven't come back to prepandemic levels of international visitors here at home.

And the benefit of not only showing this great country of ours from coast to coast and all of the culture that America showcases and has to offer the rest of the world, foreign travelers spend eight times more when they are here in the States. For every American that travels across the country spending $100 in hotels, they spend $234 in the community. International travelers spend eight times that.

And so it is a critical international—it is a critical export for us. So we would encourage passage of that into law in the funding of—the restoration of funding for Brand USA. It is critical to our future.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

Mr. Karen, sports tourism, including golf, is a major engine of economic activity, generating $114.4 billion in total economic impact and supporting 665,000 jobs in 2024, according to the Sports ETA, in the coming years.

The U.S. is preparing, of course, as you know, in the coming years to host major international events like the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics.

How can the U.S. capitalize on these opportunities and ensure local communities benefit from the spillover economic effects that these mega events will bring?

Mr. KAREN. The wonderful thing about Brand USA is the cooperative marketing that happens within it, the cooperative marketing and branding that Brand USA does with hundreds of destinations around America, State and local.

So I am sure, knowing what is coming over the next 4, 5, 6 years, that Brand USA is ready to pick up the opportunity to kind of be the concierge for all those coming to America, if you will, for international visitors looking to enjoy their stay before, during, and after these amazing events.

The technology that they use on their site allows you kind of to build itineraries. If I am coming to the U.S. for 5, 6, 7 days, where

do I want to go, what do I want to do? And it includes the surrounding areas, not just the hub cities.

And the marketing campaigns often highlight the local and unsung assets in those areas as well.

So I think the way for the spillover effect into the local communities is to let Brand USA do their thing. Empower them to do this.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Thank you very much.

The great State of Florida was the first State to enact legislation to adopt a permanent daylight savings time, pending Federal action, in order to secure more evening daylight, but we need Federal action if that is going to happen.

Dr. Kleppe and then Mr. Karen, what are the economic pros and cons of year-round daylight savings time, particularly with respect to travel and tourism?

We will start with Mr. Kleppe. And I know, Mr. Karen, you might want to elaborate a little bit. I know it was in your previous testimony.

But, Mr. Karen, please.

Dr. KLEPPE. Thank you, Chairman, for that question.

Now, the answer to that question kind of lies outside of the direct research I have done.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I understand that.

Dr. KLEPPE. But I can give you the academic perspective.

So as far as the pros, the economic pros for permanent daylight saving time I think echoes what Mr. Karen mentioned about the potential increased revenue in certain industries, particularly retail, restaurants, hospitality, outdoor recreation, those particular industries that benefit from more afternoon or evening sunlight.

I think the major cons come from the—supported by the evidence in neurology and sleep science—that being on permanent standard time is better for our cognitive function. And so being on daylight time permanently could lead to issues like absenteeism for workers, because they are more likely to be absent when there is more daylight time in the evenings. Research has shown that. And so that could have economic productivity costs if workers are working less.

And the spillover effect could be, if they are working less, salaries and wages are lower, they have less disposable income to spend on those retail and hospitality services.

So, again, it is—there is not a ton of research on it, because we don't have—we haven't lived in an environment where we have this permanent daylight time, but that is the academic perspective that I can share.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. OK. Thank you very much.

Mr. Karen, briefly, because I am over time.

Mr. KAREN. So I think Congressman Fry will appreciate this one about Myrtle Beach, because when you look at a golf destination like Myrtle Beach, and standard time goes from November to March, really about 4 months, and if daylight saving time was made permanent, it opens up afternoon hours to play more golf in the afternoon.

So the folks coming down from Ohio and Canada that like to go to Myrtle Beach, they can squeeze two rounds of golf in instead of one on these trips.

And it just basically unlocks an amazing amount of inventory for the golf industry. But that translates to good health for Americans as well. So we have millions, tens of millions more people playing golf in the afternoons as a result. So the economic impact of that is enormous.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I went over my time. I will give you opportunity, Ms. Schakowsky, to go over your time if you like.

I want to yield to you 5 minutes for your questioning, please.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you very much.

Ms. Simon, I want to thank you so much for your participation here. Thank you. And I have just a couple things that I want to ask you about.

We have a 25 percent decrease from Canada in the amount that is paid now to the United States of America, and some other places not doing so well either.

And I wanted to ask you, what are the things that are standing in the way of increasing the work that other countries are doing with the United States of America? So if you could talk about what kind of improvements that we could make.

It is really too bad I think with Canada that we are—they have been a good friend of ours for a long time and no longer.

But if you could talk about what we need to do to make it better for foreign travel.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Congresswoman. That is a wonderful question, and I appreciate it.

International travelers are confronted with a number of issues that are prohibiting them or inhibiting them from coming to the United States, starting with, I think, rising costs.

We are an expensive destination. Hotel costs and transportation costs haven't really gone down since the pandemic. So business costs are up. Therefore, traveler expenses are up.

And then we, by policy, are now adding rising expenses to just them coming to the United States with the $250 visa integrity fee that is proposed.

There are also higher entrance fees that have gone into effect for ESTA fees for travelers from visa waiver countries. That has gone from $21 to $40. It nearly doubled.

Land border fees, which would affect, obviously, Canada. The I–94 form entrance fee has gone from $6 to $30.

So there are significant additions to the cost of just entering the United States.

And now there is a proposal from—an Executive order, actually—to introduce international fees that are higher than U.S. fees, residence fees, for entry to national parks.

We believe this: Just the target of these fees on international visitors sends an unwelcoming message. And you couple that with the global media attention, basically, that there has been on tariffs and the border detainments, hardening of immigration and ICE raids, I think, as you mentioned earlier, it presents unwelcoming images to foreign visitors. And it creates a lot of uncertainty, a lot of negative sentiment, a lot of feeling of unwelcomeness.

And it is coming at a time when there are a lot of other options. There's very high competition for destinations right now. Other

countries are making it cheaper and easier to visit, and we are making it harder and more expensive.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. So what do you recommend are the things that we could do to improve travel to the United States?

Ms. SIMON. I would eliminate those fees. Do not move forward with the $250 visa integrity fee. Do not implement a higher fee for international visitors to national parks.

I would reauthorize in 2027—but for now fund through the new VISIT USA Act—Brand USA, because they really do drive travelers and demand to the United States.

They also are challenged with making sure that they address policies and procedures and that international visitors are well informed.

And as my colleague said, they coordinate destination marketing across the country and help our destinations and cities across the country welcome and let international visitors know they are welcome to the United States to visit.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. So are you working to help prevent the things that are keeping them away?

Ms. SIMON. Absolutely. Our members are working with the international travel trade, the tour operators and travel agents that are actually working with the consumers, international consumers. And we spend a great deal of time educating them on current policies and, as they are changing, making sure they are aware of changes, making sure they understand facts versus perhaps misperceptions.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you.

Ms. BILIRAKIS. The gentlelady yields back.

Now I recognize the chairman of the full committee, Mr. Guthrie, for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thanks.

Thanks, Dr. Kleppe. This is for you.

I mentioned that my district splits. Literally, I live right almost on the border. And I mentioned in the afternoon the sun rises and sun sets an hour different in Portland and Bardstown and my place where I live in Fort Worth.

But if you look at Bardstown and where I live, we have the same sun but different time. And so I know we all want—we are interested in the extra hour. I would love to have the extra hour afternoon time.

But also, if you change it in the morning, then kids from Bardstown will be—actually, there is a town called Brandenburg. It is really west of where I live. It is still in eastern. They would be going to like 8:30, I think, before the sun would rise.

So would you just talk about the effects of daylight changing time zones when people live this close together?

Dr. KLEPPE. Absolutely, Chairman. Thank you for that question. I would also like to get in that when you mentioned the Derby for Kentucky tourism, let's not forget Keeneland and Lexington as well.

But yeah, to answer your question, Kentucky, your district, is——

Mr. GUTHRIE. Well, for 140,000 people to come to Keeneland too on a certain day, that would be great.

Dr. KLEPPE. Yeah. I know your district is uniquely positioned as it relates to time and sunlight issues.

What I can say from our research is that there is no reason to expect that these time shifts would differentially affect your constituents based on time zone.

However, a shift in the policy to permanent—for example, permanent daylight saving time would be more salient and potentially more costly, depending on what time zone you are in and where you are in the time zone.

So just, for example, for the part of your district that is on the western edge of the eastern time zone, the costs and risks of reduced sunlight in the mornings are going to be much more significant than your constituents on the eastern side of the central time zone.

And so I think you could have a whole 'nother hearing on time zone issues. We could spend a whole day on that. But I would just urge you to consider those issues as well if you consider any policy changes, that the impacts, some of the costs would certainly differ, based on where you are located within a time zone.

Mr. GUTHRIE. So, Mr. Karen, so the opposite of—so the hour comes up. So it would be like 8:30 before the sun comes up in the western edge of eastern, but where I live, the sun goes down about 4:35 like now. December 21st I think the sun goes down just a little after 4 o'clock in the afternoon, probably before 5. It is between 4:30 and 5.

And then other States, you have, like, we are across from Indiana. I think Indiana, they changed the way they observe time. But it used to be there were the counties around Louisville was always on eastern. The counties around.

So could you just describe about the difficulty of just a patchwork of time zone changes?

So let's say we let each State do it. Kentucky doesn't do it but Indiana does do it. For some reason, Indiana did it a couple years ago. As a matter of fact, the Governor at the time—he ended up being president of Purdue—said that that was probably the most difficult decision he made as Governor—or the most political, I would say.

Mr. KAREN. So I think the legislation that is being proposed right now in Congress, whether it is to make daylight saving time permanent but it would allow for States to opt out into standard time, or there is another law that would allow States just simply to choose whichever one they want—you know, we already—I mean, I am no States' rights expert necessarily, but I can tell you we already have enough issues with figuring out what time zone some States are in. If we add another variable, whether what time zone and if they are in DST or standard time, that will be very interesting.

Dr. Kleppe and I were talking earlier. Just imagine that Florida is on standard, Georgia is on daylight, South Carolina is on standard. Just having to figure that out is just mind blowing.

But it would cause a lot of complexities for sure, additional complexities, to understand—in my industry golfers probably, if they

cross State lines, they might show up late or the technology may have to identify which golf course is in what time zone, in what time observance.

I would urge Congress to pick a uniform time, and, if it is possible, to get the entire country on it.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Meade County and Breckinridge County, some people who live on the very eastern area of Breckinridge just observe eastern time because most people work at Fort Knox. They live there and Fort Knox is in eastern time. But the school system is on the county time. So it is confusing. I have showed up—the one time I have actually messed up was going to Irvine, that area, on time.

So, Ms. Maietta, could you elaborate on the economic impact of the lodging industry, local communities that rely on tourism. Specifically, why is travel-driven spending such an important part of the broader U.S. economy?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you for the question, Chairman.

Travel and tourism brings us all together, for one. It unites us around big events, wonderful moments.

People are traveling more now for experiences, whether that is coming to the Derby or other sporting events or concerts and food, Bourbon Trails, and the like.

But more than that, we fuel communities. If you think about the $83 billion that the industry supports in tax revenue alone, that goes back into individual communities.

Any time a hotel goes up in Main Street America, commerce around that community flows, because the coffee shop opens, the retail store opens, a florist pops up across the street.

And so it just generates both revenue for communities that go back into emergency services, supporting firefighters—

Mr. GUTHRIE. I just noticed my clock has expired.

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you.

Mr. GUTHRIE. We are all looking forward to hearing more.

I will yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I appreciate it very much, Mr. Chairman.

I now will recognize the ranking member for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am probably not going to ask questions about the time because, to be honest, I really think the key is if we can get a consensus on agreeing on one time. Very few people I talk to want to go back and forth, but then they don't agree on what we should stay with. So that is the problem.

But I want to talk about some travel issues. As we know, the COVID–19 pandemic grounded travel to a halt, decimating the tourism industry, which is still recovering, frankly.

So, Ms. Simon, in your testimony you state the U.S. is not expected to reach prepandemic levels of international travel until 2029, even with major sporting events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympics Games taking place in the U.S. even before that.

So let me just ask you, how will challenges to visiting the U.S., such as increased visa fees and other cost increases, long visa wait times, hidden fees, immigration concerns, and unpredictable mar-

ket conditions, impact America's ability to reap the full benefits of hosting next year's World Cup and other international sporting events, if you will?

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Ranking Member, and I appreciate the question.

There are a number of issues that you have mentioned that are impacting visitation to the United States. And the mega events that we have coming in the next few years are definitely going to help our international numbers stay somewhat stable.

But the impacts that we are seeing are not just for visitors coming in for those mega events. It is the traditional visitors and tourists that are coming in for other activities, just to see the national parks, to see the destinations, to experience the American culture.

Issues like rising costs at the border, tariffs and rising costs, concerns on different travel supplies, like hotels, again, transportation costs, and so on, for their whole trip, and then again the negative sentiment that some of these rising costs and tariffs and images that are being presented about the United States are impacting travelers' decisions on whether or not to come to the United States.

I think we have a golden opportunity with the mega events, starting with the World Cup next year, to really spotlight the United States and all the different, unique things we have to do, see, and experience here in our country.

And that should have a lasting effect on growing travel in future years, because people will see all the things that they can do. And those who are coming for the Games will be experiencing multiple destinations while they are here. So that is going to drive, again, business across the country.

Mr. PALLONE. And let me ask you this. You know, the Jersey Shore, it is mostly people, you know, from Americans, you know, New York, Pennsylvania, come, right. But we do get a signif—or we used to get a significant number of Canadians, and that clearly has dropped significantly.

So, you know, I mean, I don't understand, the Trump administration just keeps targeting Canada in this kind of overreaching tariff wars and attacks on Canada. He wants it to be another State, whatever.

But both Mr. Karen, and you, Ms. Simon, your testimony cited a significant drop of close to 25 percent of inbound travel from Canada. Mr. Karen said this has led to a $4 billion loss in spending from Canadian tourists.

So, Ms. Simon, how does this attitude towards one of our closest allies impact inbound tourism and the greater national Canada? I am talking about Canada, now, not just to New Jersey, but elsewhere.

Ms. SIMON. As you indicated, Canada is down, through September, 25 percent. That varies by land entry and air. Air is about 23 percent, lLand entry is about 31 percent of Canadian decline. It is primarily due, as you said, to the tariffs and the political relations, if you will, with Canada.

Our Canadian friends are longing to come back, and our destinations across the country are really trying to help them see that they are welcome in the country. But we really have to do a very significant job, I think, of communicating that from the U.S. Gov-

ernment, not just individual destinations, the U.S. Government has to say, "You are welcome, we want you here."

Mr. PALLONE. Well, I also think Trump has got to stop saying he is going to make it a State, you know. I mean, I can't think of anything that is more insulting to Canadians than saying "You are going to be our 51st State" over and over again, you know. Anyway, thank you so much.

Ms. SIMON. Yes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize Dr. Dunn, and he represents part of the Panhandle. Isn't that right?

Mr. DUNN. It is.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. In Florida, so I know that is a split time zone, so——

Mr. DUNN. And I am assured I am allowed to——

Mr. BILIRAKIS. You are recognized.

Mr. DUNN [continuing]. Boast about the free State of Florida today, so if I may, I would like to do a little of that.

My district includes Panama City Beach, Apalachicola, St. George Island, 30A, Rosemary Beach, Mexico Beach, and our treasured State capital city, Tallahassee. They are all welcomed tourist destinations domestically and internationally.

I think it has been known that our Panhandle area has been known as the Emerald Coast, the Miracle Strip, and sometimes called the Forgotten Coast. It is frequently ranked as home to the world's best beaches. I happen to think that is correct.

And as my colleagues noted, the travel to America has been susceptible to a changing global economy, especially after the restrictions placed upon the country during the pandemic.

I support the hard work of our hospitality and service industry in Florida. They work around the clock to make our State a top travel destination. We number over 100 million tourist visits a year.

In addition to the many programs we support in Congress, like the public-private partnership Brand USA, and the billions of dollars generated at our national parks every year, I mean, there's a lot of good things to say and talk about.

I look forward to discussing that today. And, of course, we are preparing for the 2028 Summer Olympics and 2026 FIFA World Cup as well, so—not to mention our birthday celebration, the 250th.

Ms. Maietta, the American Hotel and Lodging Association State of Industry shows that the occupancy rates in 2024 are still below the prepandemic 2019 level. What are the biggest barriers preventing us from recovering from COVID, perhaps, I guess, and expanding our domestic and international travel markets, and how have traveler behaviors changed since the pandemic? Thank you.

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you for the question. So I think there are a couple of—there are many factors that have kept us from reaching prepandemic levels. But make no mistake: Americans are traveling. Their travel habits have changed. They are looking for experiences. They are looking for budget experiences. There is a hotel that meets every pocketbook, so I am very proud about that.

I think it is really important for us as we think about our industry that is still facing a significant staffing shortage and that prevents other services—perhaps a restaurant stays closed, or we are not offering room service because we don't have the staff to support that. So releasing the supplemental H–2B visas, it is a legal guest worker program that helps supplement our staff, particularly in places like Florida, resort destinations, far-flung places that are hard to get to for staff. And so the visa—the H–2B visa program is of particular importance.

And, again, passage of the VISIT USA Act, supporting Brand USA, so that we can continue to showcase the best of America with a welcome message, ease of travel, and making it affordable for international guests to come here and spend their money here will be important.

Mr. DUNN. Well, I urge you to continue pressing on the guest worker programs. I mean, we tried to fix that years ago. I mean, this is something we need across a number of industries, so please keep working on that.

Mr. Karen, something you said earlier actually piqued my interest. Did I understand you to advocate for a single time zone for all of the United States?

Mr. KAREN. No. No, sir. A single time observance, not a single time zone. So daylight savings—that standard.

Mr. DUNN. Oh, OK. Better. I was struggling with that concept. You know, there is a reason why we have time zones. I was going to say, why don't we all just go on Zulu time or whatever the heck, you know.

You know, so I was working in Australia a number of years ago, the Army sent me there, and they actually define local time—they define time zones quite locally, and they break them down into 15-minute intervals. I mean, that gets, you know, kind of confusing with the train schedules and whatnot, but—so, I was, you know, just—I am glad you clarified that point for me. I was a little stunned.

Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

Now we will recognize Ms. Castor from the great State of Florida, from the Tampa Bay area, and she has a lot of hidden treasures in her district as well.

Ms. CASTOR. Yes, we do.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. You are recognized.

Ms. CASTOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Simon, international travelers have a lot of options. These are their hard-earned dollars, discretionary dollars, and they can travel just about anywhere they want all across the world. I think that highlights the importance of a consistent public-private partnership to promote American destinations.

We took an unfortunate U-turn under the Big Ugly Bill in slashing support for Brand USA, and that is why I am so grateful to Chair Bilirakis for getting us back on track under the Vital Investment in Sustaining International Tourism Act to the USA, the VISIT USA Act. I am proud to be the colead on that.

But can you talk about why it is important to have consistent messaging, advertising, promotion outside the United States to encourage international travelers to come to the U.S.?

Ms. SIMON. Thank you for the question. And Brand USA does do a tremendous job at that consistent messaging and making sure that they are touting the best of America for international visitors to come to our country. That is critical because there is so much competition. We are—as I indicated earlier, we are the only country that is going to see an international spending—visitor spending decline in 2025. The rest of the world, global international travel is growing. And it is critical that we really focus on this as an industry and as an economic driver of our country.

Brand USA is so important because for every dollar they spend in industry promotions, the return is $21. So it is a logical investment.

Ms. CASTOR. And that is not just in the State of Florida. That is all across the country. There are plenty of places, like I know Rep Soto is going to talk about everything happening in the Orlando area, you have heard our—but international travelers come all over to—and that supports jobs and local economies all across the country, is that right?

Ms. SIMON. Absolutely. And Brand USA is, by law, to promote smaller destinations, rural destinations, small businesses, as well as the main, of course, gateways and attractions to the country. So they are bringing that economic benefit across the country to all businesses and business owners.

Ms. CASTOR. And I hear from my Tampa Bay area of small business owners, they need all the help they can get right now.

And I know many, many travelers are alarmed by the policies of the Trump administration. And I have heard directly from some of our best friends from Canada that they miss visiting the Sunshine State that they love. Even—an aside—my mother, who is 84 years old, used to play golf with three Canadian women, and when the President started to insult Canada they said, "Betty, we are packing up and we are not coming back," and they have not returned.

And then, clearly, there are larger policy issues at play, an affordability squeeze, over half of Americans are cutting back on travel. Part of it is because of some of the deceptive information out there when it comes to lodging.

I want to thank everyone on this committee for passing my bipartisan Hotel Fees Transparency Act. It has passed the House now. We are waiting for the Senate.

Ms. Maietta, thank you for being outspoken in support of this. Why is it important that domestic travelers, or travelers from anywhere, understand the price that is real to them, especially when they are so concerned about the affordability squeeze right now?

Ms. MAIETTA. Congresswoman Castor, thank you for your leadership on that important bill.

Transparency is so important to all our guests, and I am so proud of our industry for leading on displaying the price—the total, all-in price—at the time of booking.

If you think about the habits of people booking hotels today, they are coming from many different sites. Not everyone is booking direct, even though we encourage that as the best pathway. And so

making sure that the rest of the travel ecosystem is up to the same standards of displaying an all-in price, incomprehensive of resort fees. It should be noted that resort fees are only charged in 6 percent of all hotels. And we know that guests are fine paying those charges if they are getting a benefit or an amenity for it, but it is not widespread. Not every hotel is charging resort fees.

Ms. CASTOR. But it will be a little bit of help for travelers if the Senate can get that across the finish line, don't you agree?

Ms. MAIETTA. Exactly. Thank you for sponsoring that bill, and we hope to see that crossthe finish line.

Ms. CASTOR. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. LEE [presiding]. Thank you. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

I appreciate all of our witnesses for being here today and sharing your insight.

Tourism is critical for Florida's economic growth and success. This fiscal year, the Tampa Bay area, which I am also proud to represent, surpassed a record $1.2 billion in hotel revenue. In Florida's 15th District, we regularly welcome visitors from across the State, country, and world to our many attractions, from amusement parks like Busch Gardens to beloved annual celebrations, including the Florida Strawberry Festival, which is a personal favorite of mine.

I look forward to hearing more from each of you about how we can best support these industries and keep our great State home.

So, Mr. Karen, I would like to return to your testimony. As you know, Florida has a booming golf industry, we have already touched on that here today, which generates over $11 billion each year, according to the Florida Sports Foundation.

In your written testimony, you suggest creating golf tourism as a distinct marketing category to better position the United States as an international leader in this industry. How can the U.S. better distinguish its golf offerings against international competitors like Europe and the Middle East?

Mr. KAREN. What a great question. You know, golf is super-hot right now. For the last 5 years, we have had year-over-year growth, and it is because of the popularity. We have young people, people of color, women, and more flocking to this game, and the vibe is just different. So it is time to kind of leverage this interest into stronger marketing.

And I think restoring Brand USA's full funding—and maybe having a conversation between myself and Fred Dixon, who is the CEO—would go a long way in putting the American golf courses at center stage because, you know, Ireland and Scotland, and the Middle East now especially, are spending enormous money to get world travelers to come play golf in their locations.

Right now, golf is not very conspicuous in some of that marketing. There are some exceptions. I am sure Florida puts it front and center. South Carolina Parks and Recreation Tourism, they put golf center of their marketing when they go overseas and market to England and so forth to come to the States.

But it is about time to kind of recognize the economic—we talked about the economic impact of golf in the communities and the great resorts around America.We have got the best product in the world,

but we are just not selling it very well. So it is time to kind of lift it and up and double down.

Ms. LEE. And you just touched on something about State marketing and State work in this arena. Is there a role that States and localities can also play in amplifying the marketing for golf tourism?

Mr. KAREN. Absolutely. And we find—I found, since I have been on the board at the U.S. Travel Association over the years, there are States that will slash funding, or cut it completely in some cases, for all marketing. When they are looking at economic development and spending in their States, they slash tourism marketing.

And I think that is a self-inflicted wound. We have got the greatest assets, people—we just talked about the economic impact of people spending money. Why would we not double down on that?

Every State has golf courses in America, right. Every State has marquee ones as well.So, I mean, I am biased a little bit, but I think they should put that front and center. The imagery that you can put on the websites and the videos you could have on the golf assets are incredible. So I appreciate your support on that.

Ms. LEE. You also mentioned the importance of improving our transportation infrastructure in promoting golf tourism. I strongly agree that we need to make air travel, in particular, more reliable. I recently introduced the FLIGHT Act, which would notify passengers whenever a flight is delayed by more than 15 minutes.

Are there any existing Federal transportation programs that we should consider examining or strengthening, in your view, to help promote easier access to golf destinations?

Mr. KAREN. I don't focus on the air travel with golf so much as I do the resorts themselves, and they are all doing quite well in the United States. But I would—I mean, I would say keep modernizing the infrastructure, keep modernizing what airports are willing to do.

Luggage transfer—I mean, we have millions of people bringing golf clubs to the United States, you know, so getting those clubs transferred quickly and safely is important to those folks.

So it is not my area of expertise, but certainly we would be supportive of any modernization and progressive practices with air transport.

Ms. LEE. We have got some really innovative luggage and baggage transportation options in effect in Florida, so I agree.

Ms. Maietta, you mentioned in your written testimony that the recent Federal Government shutdown had a devastating impact on hospitality. Would you briefly tell us what that effect was and what you hope to see going forward?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you for the question, Congresswoman. The shutdown impacted travel immediately. Overnight, things changed, people canceled bookings. I have heard even from Members this week that those who were planning to travel over Thanksgiving, there was just a wave of cancellations.

So the immediacy of that led to 13—or $1.3 billion in lost revenue from hotels alone, all of that revenue that goes back into the community when people are traveling. We would urge a long-term

solution to the January deadline, avoiding shutdowns, and ensuring that travel is not caught in the crosshairs.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. We are out of time. Thank you for that.

All right. Mr. Soto, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOTO. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I am proud to represent the theme park capital of the world in central Florida, areas like Orlando, Kissimmee, and St. Cloud, and we are honored to have Disney, Universal, Sea World, Gatorland, one of our local favorites too. We also have sport fishing in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in Northern Everglades, space tourism in the district right next to mine, with Cape Canaveral being the busiest space port in the world. We are about to hit 100-plus launches this year. And beaches like Cocoa and Melbourne—although I will say Chairman Bilirakis and Representatives Castor and Dunn have some pretty fine beaches too.

We have spring tourism and agtourism, much like Reps Cammack and Lee as well. And we see some strengths right now. Thankfully because of investment with Epic Universe, that really powered us for the summer when we saw tourism down in other places across the country, and Disney's commitment to $8 billion over 10 years has been also helpful.

But demand is steady but flat, right. We see 7.3 million passengers at Orlando International Airport, the busiest airport in the State, that is about a 2.1 percent decrease, so we are hanging tough, but, you know, we have got to continue it through.

I think we are going to be strong through the holidays, but I worry about January or February after that all goes because we face some challenges. Trump's mass deportations hurt the workforce. A million immigrants have lost their legal status in Florida between Cubans, Venezuelans, and Haitians who work in this industry.

And then obstinate trade and foreign policies hurt foreign tourists, especially Canada. Why are we messing with Canada? For the record, Orlando loves Canada. OK.

Europe too, as well, and Brazil. Fifty percent tariffs on Brazil. They are pound-for-pound some of the most lucrative tourists. And so—and then add on this the Kavanaugh stops, where if you look Hispanic and you have a Spanish accent and you are a blue-collar worker, you could be detained right now. We have seen American citizens and legal tourists detained.

In Orlando, I want to make it very clear, we welcome everyone. Division and discrimination are bad for business. We welcome folks from across the world.

And then add in the tariffs, rising healthcare, groceries, energy and housing costs. And I am worried about the domestic demand as well. So this is why supporting the bipartisan VISIT USA Act is so important.

And, Ms. Maietta, you talked about workforce shortages. How has that affected guest experiences across the Nation right now?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you, Congressman, for that question. They are seeing services cut back or hours cut back. It is so important that we release the supplemental H–2B visas. That is 66,000 annually, and it is simply not enough to support all the resorts in Flor-

ida alone, let alone the rest of the country. It is a proven guest work—legal guest worker program that has decades of experience.

When we can hire American, we do, and—but we rely on that program to supplement around the country, especially as we are looking at the big events and ensuring that we are well staffed.

Mr. SOTO. And that is a—forgive me, because my time is limited—that is a perfect transition. Ms. Simon, how could not only workforce shortages but tariff insanity and mass deportations and Kavanaugh stops and all this stuff affect the World Cup or the Olympics?

Ms. SIMON. Thank you for the question. I think what you have described is what a lot of international—potential international visitors are seeing, and it does creat a lot of uncertainty, a lot of fear and anxiety about traveling to the U.S. We need to make sure that there is a welcome—consistent welcome, unified message saying that international visitors to the United States is not the same as immigration. Visitation is not immigration, and we need to make that very clear.

Obviously, supporting the VISIT USA Act is going to be critical so that Brand USA can get out there and get that message to the international travelers.

Mr. SOTO. Thank you.

And, Dr. Kleppe, it is interesting to hear your analysis. I wrote that bill back in 2013—you may or may not know that—although the Rs never let me pass it in 4 years, and the Florida Legislature then promptly passed it right afterwards, so I feel some justice being here today to discuss it.

Before that, everybody was trying to keep on standard time, and of course keeping on daylight savings time would be a better impact. Have you estimated the total revenue from this change to extending daylight savings time to tourism nationally?

Dr. KLEPPE. So thanks for the question, Congressman. I have not. That is not something that I have done in my research that I have seen——

Mr. SOTO. It would be positive, though, based upon your experience, right?

Dr. KLEPPE. It is hard to estimate. One of the reasons it is hard to estimate is that we can have—I mean, you can see it in Mr. Karen's testimony. We can get at estimates, I think, reasonably about what the added revenues would be in certain industries with an extra hour of evening daylight. I think the issue is the cost of that, the cost coming from disruption to our circadian rhythms, which is well established in neurology, sleep science, and kind of the medicinal community that believes that permanent standard time is a better alignment with our brains and our function cognitively. We don't know how that would affect economic decisions broadly. And so it is really hard to come up with an estimate of that side of it. And that would affect all aspects of the economy, not just industries like tourism and outdoor recreation.

Mr. SOTO. Thanks for your opinion. My time has expired.

Ms. LEE. Mr.Obernolte, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Well, thank you very much. And let me say how delighted I am to be having this hearing. This is an issue that I have been deeply engaged on for the last 10 years.

When I was serving in the California State Legislature, I helped lead an effort to enable the State of California to go on full-time daylight savings time should Congress act to amend the Universal Time Act to give States that option. And then later, California passed Prop 7 in 2018, which empowers the legislature to make that change.

Unfortunately, Congress has not enabled that choice for States, and the bill that we are hearing today would allow States that option. And I think that it is very telling that when the most populous State in the Nation is voting to enable a switch onto full-time daylight savings time, that Congress should take note of that. And there are many States that would follow that example.

The evidence is overwhelming and compelling that it is not good for us to be changing back and forth twice a year. I mean, it is not good for our health. It is not good for our sleep cycles. It is not good for our productivity. It is not good for traffic accidents. I mean, I think everyone should be able to acknowledge that this is a practice that needs to stop.

And, I mean, if you want evidence for why we got into this situation in the first place, look at the origins of daylight savings time, which was born out of a necessity to conserve energy when lighting was the predominant consumer of energy. And now we are in an era with LED lighting where lighting is no longer the predominant consumer. I mean, I think this is an idea whose time has come. We need to stop switching back and forth.

So the compelling question that confronts us today is which to choose. Do we choose permanent daylight savings time or do we choose permanent standard time? And there are proponents on both sides of that issue. This is the one thing that has prevented us from doing what everybody wants to do, which is to stop switching. So to me this is the crux of the argument.

So, Mr. Karen, I found your testimony very compelling. One would think, looking at a golf course operator, for example, that you would be agnostic as to whether or not you had time in the morning or time in the evening. I mean, the problem that we have is, as the days grow shorter, we don't have the option of having sunlight in both the morning and the evening. We have to pick one or the other. You would think that a golfer could choose to golf early or choose to golf late and it wouldn't matter, and yet your testimony is that, overwhelmingly, economic activity is enhanced by adopting full-time daylight savings time, which puts the daylight in the afternoon. Can you, like, opine as to why that might be?

Mr. KAREN. I really think except for Saturday and Sunday mornings, where people love to grab the first tee times of the day, you look at the rest of the week and the availability of Americans to play, especially working Americans, they just simply prefer the afternoon. There is a 40 percent premium that is—or 40 percent more revenue that is drawn off the afternoon hours simply because that is where the demand is. So if that is where the demand is and we can open up a little bit more inventory when they are available to play, it is an exponential effect.

So, yeah, I think—again, what I said, it is trading 6 p.m. for 6 a.m., and Americans that work are not going to make 6 a.m. tee

times Monday through Friday, but they will make 3 p.m. Tee times to play nine holes if they can get it in, right.

So the economic opportunity is tens of millions of dollars. And we only measured public golf courses and their green fees. We didn't even touch private clubs and the economic impact there. Cart fee, merchandise, food and beverage—it is into the tens of millions of dollars in opportunity, and that is great for the economy, but it also gets people outside recreating together. The social and mental health benefits of golf are well documented. I think there is nothing better to build relationships when you are on a golf course with someone for 2, 3, 4 hours.

So there are health benefits and economic benefits, and what I haven't heard is the economic benefits of standard time. There may be some health arguments, but I haven't heard any economic arguments. I think more sunlight in the afternoon has health and economic.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Right. Well, I mean, I think that we should give States the option. You know, we right now give States the option to either switch back and forth or to adopt permanent standard time, and very few States have chosen not to switch back and forth, despite the overwhelming evidence. And, you know, this bill would just enable States to make that choice to adopt full-time, permanent daylight savings time, and I think that you will see the wholesale adoption of that if we give States that option.

So I would urge this committee to move this bill forward, to have a markup on it, and let's have this conversation. I yield back.

Ms. LEE. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Trahan for 5 minutes.

Ms. TRAHAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to our witnesses today for being here and for certainly your expertise.

So I feel that there is a strong case to be made for permanent daylight savings time. My argument is twofold. First, disrupting Americans' circadian rhythms is bad policy, and Congress should settle on a single standard.

Second, daylight savings time is preferable to standard time. When our circadian rhythms are disrupted, brain functioning worsens. And Dr. Kleppe seems to uncover precisely this phenomenon in his study on investor responsiveness after the March time shift.

Dr. Kleppe, can you summarize briefly the impacts of DST adjustments on investor performance that you found in your research?

Dr. KLEPPE. Yes, I would be happy to. Thank you, Congresswoman.

So, yes, our research does focus specifically on the potential cost of switching from—to and from permanent time—permanent standard time to permanent daylight saving time. And what we find is that investors are slower to incorporate earnings news into their evaluations of companies through stock prices in that window right after the time change.

And we think that has a couple of big implications. So, you know, when prices don't reflect underlying value because of this market inefficiency, it is basically bad for everyone because it potentially creates higher risk and uncertainty because we don't know what the true value is, and it can create disparities across investors.

So in particular what we find in our research is that, you know, retail investors are likely at a disadvantage than more sophisticated investors, and so there is a chance for this—worse trading outcomes for retail investors because they are less able to overcome some of these cognitive impairment issues that come from changing time.

So that is really what our research can speak to. The issue of what do we do if we choose to not switch becomes a lot more complicated.

Ms. TRAHAN. I will get there. You know, in a nutshell, Dr. Kleppe found that investors weren't as sharp after the clock shift. Analogize this effect to kids in a classroom or drivers on the road. Put simply, the aggregate impacts of lowered cognition across society appear profound. So I do believe the evidence is clear, it is time for us to decide on one standard and to just stick with it.

But what should that standard be: standard time, as it is so called, or DST? And I would argue DST. During this committee's last hearing on DST, we heard testimony about the mental health benefits associated with having an extra hour of sunlight in the evening.

So let's also explore the small business impacts. Mr. Karen, in your testimony you emphasize the significant economic impacts associated with additional evening sunlight. Can you elaborate on why DST is preferable to standard time for golf course owners, in particular, and small business owners more generally?

Mr. KAREN. With pleasure. So the golf industry is made up of 15,000 small business operators, and their businesses track to what we call recreational daylight, when Americans are available to play golf, and if the sunlight tracks better with when Americans are available to play golf is only better for the economy and for their health. It is as simple as that.

And, you know, the interesting thing to this discussion—we are talking about standard versus daylight saving time, and daylight saving time is already 8 months of the year. In an ironic way it is our standard time. It is not the exception. And over time, Congress has closed that window of standard time to make it smaller and smaller over time. So I think we have already been moving in that direction for decades. It is a matter of now just kind of having the fortitude to choose one, and obviously our industry is mixed, but we strongly favor daylight saving time.

Ms. TRAHAN. Thank you. That is a great point. I mean, ultimately, the evidence shows that switching our clocks twice a year harms cognition, disrupts daily life, affects mental health, decreases opportunities for families and businesses alike. But by adopting permanent daylight savings time we can establish a single, consistent standard that confers real benefits on all Americans, especially our children. So thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS [presiding]. All right. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

We will recognize Mr. Kean from the great State of New Jersey. You are recognized for 5 minutes for your questioning, sir.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to our distinguish witnesses for being here today.

New Jersey is the proud home to many important travel and tourism destinations. From our historic Revolutionary War battlefields, to our New Jersey Shore, the Appalachian Trail, rivers, lakes, small towns, golf courses, to our stadiums, New Jersey boasts some of the greatest sites in the United States, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on the impact of their industries in bringing tourism and travel to New Jersey and to the United States.

Ms. Maietta, the State of New Jersey is pleased to host eight matches of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The hospitality industry is critical to hosting these important matches. Could you please share how the hospitality industry is preparing for these highly anticipated events?

Ms. MAIETTA. Congressman, thank you for the question.

We are accustomed to holding and hosting big events all the time, but of course bringing in so many people at the same time simultaneously does present some unique challenges, but also opportunities. Right now, our industry is working very closely with law enforcement and city officials and all stakeholders involved to ensure that we are prepared. I would encourage that—those lines of communication to stay open.

Thank you for serving on the caucus. We commend the administration for setting up task forces around these big events to ensure that they go off without a hitch and are as smooth as possible.

I would also say that it is important that we are well staffed for those. So, again, H–2B visas, releasing those supplemental visas in a timely way so that staff can be there in time for the games will be critical.

Thank you.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. And following up on this, the northeastern and mid-Atlantic United States are home to many important Revolutionary War battlefields. While battles in neighboring States are often highlighted, I would like to note, for the record, that some of the most decisive American victories of the Revolutionary War took place in my home State of New Jersey. These include battles such as the Battle of Trenton and the Battle of Springfield.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of American independence, can you share the important role the hospitality industry plays in supporting travel and tourism to these important American battlefields in New Jersey?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you for that question. I think we have a tremendous opportunity around the celebrations tied to our 250th anniversary—birthday, I should say. That presents a really unique opportunity to encourage people to go out and see the best that America has to offer, driving more, travel, incentivizing people to travel, making it easier to travel.

Next year really presents a unique opportunity, and our industry is working really hard to highlight historic hotels that are iconic and that play and have played an important role in the history of this country.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you.

Mr. Karen, New Jersey is home to countless athletes. My district alone had four New Jerseyans compete in the Summer 2024 Olym-

pics. How do the athletics industry and athletics across New Jersey bring increased travel and tourism to our State?

Mr. KAREN. Great question. First of all, it is amazing to have four Olympians. As someone who lived in Haddon Heights for several years, I absolutely love the Garden State.

And travel athletics is enormous in America, right. So you are asking about how to capitalize on that. I would say to make sure that your State tourism and local market—destination marketing organizations are fully funded and fully staffed so that they can build the partnerships with these athletic-based organizations. Let them do the work they are good at and build those relationships, recruit them into your State to have those fantastic tournaments, events, and so forth.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. So what—you know, there are many recreational facilities across New Jersey that contribute to the economic benefits, whether they be stadiums, whether they be golf courses, many other small businesses in between. What are some of the things specific to each of these industries that you would recommend for a State like New Jersey and the Nation?

Mr. KAREN. Sure. So, you know, just spitballing here a little bit, but recreational facilities certainly help ensure the people of New Jersey are healthy. They are spending their time and money outside of hospitals and doctors' offices and into the economy, right. And that means that more people in New Jersey are enjoying their life and spending their money wherever they are. So there is a direct benefit there between recreating and enjoying your life—a longer, healthier life—and being able to add to the economy.

But I also don't want to forget, especially New Jersey, the environmental benefit, not just the economic benefit, of several hundred golf courses around New Jersey, some of the best in the world.

Mr. KEAN. I would agree with that too.

Mr. KAREN. You know, they offer much-needed green space in a pretty densely populated State. Even places like Bayonne Golf Club, which was turned from an environmentally disastrous piece of land into a very healthy living green space. That happened at Liberty National as well. So New Jersey has been a leading example of the environmental positivity of recreational places.

Mr. KEAN. Great outdoors, great shore. Many people—more people need to come to New Jersey for our wonderful tourism industry. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The gentleman yields back.

Now we will recognize Ms. Clarke for her 5 minutes of questioning.

Ms. CLARKE. Good morning. And thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Schakowsky, for holding this hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for joining us today.

I am proud to say that my hometown, Brooklyn, New York City, is an iconic travel destination that imagery is evoked in music, culture, art, and whose landmarks are internationally recognized. And as the Notorious B.I.G. would say, "If you don't know, now you know."

New York City is the number one international travel destination in the United States, welcoming millions every year, not to mention New York State, and of course Niagara Falls, Canada, and

our border. Our average international travelers make up 20 percent of my city's visitors and 50 percent of tourism spending. International tourists typically spend twice as much as domestic travelers, stay longer, and may go on to visit other cities within the United States.

It is undeniable that welcoming tourism benefits New York and the United States. However, the cruel, inhumane immigration policies of this administration have carried into the tourism industry, and for the first time since COVID, international and domestic travel is decreasing.

For reference, New York City is expected to welcome over 3 million fewer international travelers in 2025 than in 2024. The harsh rhetoric and detainment of legal tourists by this administration have cultivated a climate of fear and hostility that deters international travelers so much so that the United States is the only country to see a decline in spending from international visitors in 2025.

Tourism is an essential column of the economy, and not just in New York. In 2024 alone, travel to the United States produced $2.9 trillion in economic output, supported 15 million jobs, and generated $89 billion in State and local tax revenue. Not only are we suffering from Trump's delusional economic policies, but now also having potential tourists avoiding our Nation due to his inhumane, barbaric, and fear-mongering immigration policies and further contributing to our deteriorating economic health.

Ms. Simon, aside from harmful rhetoric, what immigration policies have you found to be particularly detrimental to the inbound tourism industry, and what ways can Congress help address these concerns?

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Congresswoman. And you are absolutely right about New York City, it is one of the biggest—well, it is the biggest draw for international visitors and a major gateway, obviously, for them to enter the country.

Thank you for the question. You know, the policies that we have seen that have really impacted visita—the image of U.S. for visitation include really the hardened enforcement of immigration policies and the global attention that it is getting on those expansive policies. It is creating concern and fear and a sentiment that they are just not welcome here in the United States.

We need to be very clear, the Government needs to be very clear, that visitation is not immigration and that we welcome international visitors. We want them here. We want them to come, contribute to our economy, and experience all that the U.S. has to offer.

We really need to eliminate the proposed $250 visa integrity fee. That is going to make it so expensive just to enter the country, on top of the application fee that is already $185. And then higher fees targeting international visitors in general, both for entry as well as entering the national parks. They feel like they are targeted, and they really need to understand that we want them here.

Ms. CLARKE. Absolutely. They feel they are being targeted. Let's call it what it is, and so it is unfortunate. But let me thank you for your response.

The administration's treatment towards international tourists is especially concerning to me as, next year, the New York region will be hosting multiple games and the final game of the FIFA World Cup, one of the most internationally attended sporting events. The World Cup attracts fans not only to games but to hosting cities to celebrate their team in dedicated fan zones. With 16 host cities spanning all over North American, we are expecting millions of visitors.

Next year, New York and the other cities will be on the world stage, but how can we possibly expect to keep all these fans and tourists safe when we have an administration that is hell-bent on demonizing anyone who is not born here?

I encourage my colleagues to get serious about the implications of this administration's policies and have had—that they have had and how they have metastasized in so many critical industries.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I thank the gentlelady.

Now we will recognize Mrs. Cammack and her beautiful daughter, Augie, for 5 minutes of questioning.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate everyone's patience.

As a working mom, and certainly a mom in the newborn trenches, this issue of daylight savings time actually really does impact all parents who are right now in the trenches with us. So I want to thank Chairman Bilirakis for his opening statement, particularly his remarks about the Sunshine State.

Tourism is not just a sector in our economy. It is the backbone of our State. It is the number one economic driver of Florida, as well as agriculture a quick number two right behind it. So whether we are dealing with packed stadiums during our University of Florida Gator games or families are traveling to fish or golf, the Sunshine State is a year-round mecca of activity.

And as we have heard today, the tourism and hospitality industries are facing significant pressures, whether it is hotels struggling with workforce shortages or rising operation costs, outdoor recreation industries, such as golf and fishing, are very sensitive, as I said, to daylight hours.

So as we talk about Florida's economy, but, of course, nationally, some of the challenges as we are going through this issue, I want to start out with Rosanna—is it "My-etta"? Did I say that right?

Ms. MAIETTA. Yes.

Mrs. CAMMACK. All right. Good. Good deal.

So many rural areas like mine in north central Florida, we depend heavily on seasonal tourism driven by activities such as fishing in the Gulf of America or small-town festivals. We have everything from a watermelon festival—which I am the seed-spitting champion in Newberry, by the way, I should point out—to zucchini festivals, you name it. This is a huge economic driver for our region.

So your testimony highlighted significant workforce shortages and the operational costs that continue to go up and the lingering impacts of the shutdown. So for rural communities that rely on just a few peak tourism windows to sustain them year-round, what Federal actions specifically or policy changes—and I want you to be

very specific—would most help seasonal hotels, small lodging operators, and tourism-dependent businesses that remain fully staffed, financially stable, and able to meet the demand through those critical periods?

Ms. MAIETTA. Well, thank you so much for the question.

You know, I have spoken already about the need for the H–2B visas. I do think that that is a program that needs some specific reforms. It hasn't really been reformed since 1990 when it first started. Sixty-six thousand H–2B visas are simply not enough for the demand.

We know that our hotel owners are creating housing to ensure that they can support people onsite during those peak periods so they don't have to travel back and forth, because so many, as you noted, are in rural areas.

The second program I would say that we have invested and been proud to be a part of is the Department of Labor's apprenticeship program. That is a longer-term solution. We have been working to increase the number of apprentices throughout our industry over the past 7 years, and we have seen increased retention at the end of it with a job promotion and a salary increase for those who go through that program. That is another critical program that we rely on.

Mrs. CAMMACK. Thank you. I appreciate that.

And, Dr. Kleppe, wanted to talk to you specifically about agriculture. So there is this urban legend that this all started at the behest of some farmers and ranchers, and I have to say for the record, that is not true. But this is a huge issue in our agricultural communities.

So while your research focuses primarily on the economic and behavioral effects of daylight savings time, transitions on markets, and et cetera, I want you to talk a little bit about the impact to agriculture as it relates to daylight saving time and what we could see should we decide that we make a jump away from the biannual time change.

Dr. KLEPPE. Thank you, Congresswoman. And as a parent of a young child as well, I know very—very saliently right now that kids do not care about us changing the clocks on their sleep patterns.

So thank you so much for your question. And you bring up a very important issue, and it kind of relates to kind of something I mentioned earlier about, you know, there are obviously different economic arguments for permanent standard time versus permanent daylight saving time. We heard some of the arguments from the other witnesses about the benefits of permanent daylight saving time.

The agricultural industry—again, outside of my specific research—but the academic literature on that suggests that permanent standard time would be more beneficial to the agriculture industry than permanent daylight saving time. That is my understanding of that tangential research.

And so it highlights that it is—it is not, again, clear economically what is beneficial—choosing to stay permanently on standard time versus daylight saving time—and so there is going to be regional and industry-specific preferences that you as Congress Members

will have to sort out if you decide to kind of end the biannual shifts. But I think the research is clear that biannual shifts are harming us all across the entire economy.

Mrs. CAMMACK. I appreciate that. Thank you.

And my time has expired. I yield.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Now we have Representative Veasey. You are recognized for 5 minutes for your questioning.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think this is a fascinating conversation, particularly around the daylight savings time piece. As someone that has gotten up very early in the morning to go sit in a duck blind to go hunting and wading through water, I would love to have a couple extra hours of sleep so I could go to the blind a little bit later, and so I totally get that.

But I do want to remind everybody—and I am sure it has been touched, I believe, during the opening—your opening statements, so I am sure it has been touched upon, but I do want to remind everybody about some of the history around this.

On January 7, 1974, in Washington, DC., the sun rose at 8:27 a.m. back then and it was jet black outside, and kids literally went to school with flashlights. Moms gave kids flashlights to go to school. And, of course, when things like that happen, more accidents happen. And, of course, after just a short time period, mamas all around the country started to clickety-click and said, "No mas, we don't want to do this anymore," and the Nixon administration promptly changed that.

And it is really fascinating to go back and look at some of the history, because there was even one Representative before that time that talked about putting the United States on just one time zone—it was a Representative of Hawaii—just having everybody have the same time. And so as we go back and forth and look at this, I think that it is absolutely incredible.

But I do want to take the time to ask you—and I hope that we can come back and visit this issue on daylight savings time. But with us having FIFA coming to DFW, I wanted to specifically talk to you about that. And I wanted to ask Ms. Simon about the long-term impact that an event like FIFA can have to boost tourism for SMBs and for the World Cup. How can areas like DFW transfer that into long-term economic growth for the region? Because I know that there is a housing issue that I know that we are worried about in DFW because people are going to have to drive in from long distances to come to FIFA.

So how can regions like ours translate this into long-term opportunity?

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Congressman, that is a great question.

It happens that, currently, there's good signs that there's already long-term demand for the United States, which is fantastic, even though we are seeing a decline this year and we won't be seeing numbers that reach prepandemic levels until 2029. But what we—what we can do to really focus on World Cup and taking advantage of that is, as we get this influx of visitors into the country, we can showcase what we have to offer. They are going to be seeing not only the host cities and the surrounding areas, but they are going

to be traveling from host city to host city and destination to destination and experiencing, again, all the different things that they can do and see here, including national parks, small and rural communities, authentic experiences. They will take those messages home and share what a wonderful destination the United States is, and that is going to help feed our long-term growth.

Congress can help, obviously, with, again, Brand USA, getting Brand USA fully funded for the next couple of years, making sure it is reauthorized in 2027 so that they are in market driving that demand with potential international travelers, again, recognizing and promoting the small businesses, the rural areas, and the opportunities that travel—international travelers have in the United States.

Mr. VEASEY. And speaking of international travelers, one of the big advantages that we have in the Dallas-Fort Worth area is DFW Airport, where you can get to just about anywhere in the world coming out of our regional airport there.

And as travel and tourism are key economic drivers, what can Congress do to help streamline travel processes, such as visa processing, airport capacity, security procedures, to ensure that international visitors can easily access the Dallas-Fort Worth region for events like FIFA?

Ms. SIMON. Yes. Again, thank you for the question. Very good question.

We need modernized technology in our airports. We really need to advance our airport and transportation systems and infrastructures to make sure that the ease of traveling and safety for international travelers, as well as Americans, is looked after. We also need to eliminate the proposed $250 visa integrity fee and other fees that are targeted to international travelers.

Mr. VEASEY. Taxes.

Ms. SIMON. Exactly.

Mr. VEASEY. That is right.

Ms. SIMON. And there is a new fee that is proposing higher entrance fees for international visitors to national parks. So we just think those types of things are prohibitive on making it feel—making international visitors feel like they are not welcome here.

Mr. VEASEY. Yes. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Appreciate it very much.

Now we will recognize Mr. Fry from the great State of South Carolina. Thanks for your patience.

Mr. FRY. Thank you, Chairman, for having this hearing today.

I have the privilege of representing South Carolina's Seventh Congressional District, which is known predominantly as Myrtle Beach, at least on the coast. We have got some great agricultural sectors in the western part of the district, but the Grand Strand is considered 60 miles of beach. It is 60 miles of beach.

And we have roughly 790,000 people, obviously, that live in the district, but every year the Myrtle Beach area sees 18 million people come to our area, which is, if you take it proportionally, there are 20 visitors for every one resident. It is kind of astounding when you think about it.

Tourism in the Grand Strand generates tens of billions of dollars in economic impact, supports tens of thousands of jobs. In the district we talk about tourism, but we are really talking about the livelihoods of the folks that I represent, not only the small business owners themselves but the waitress at the beachside cafe, the person who is a bartender down in Murrells Inlet, the individual who is a golf pro or works at one of our close to 90 golf courses in the Grand Strand area. Tourism is our lifeblood on the coast.

We talk about Florida, obviously we are in much the same boat. So this is very important. Tourism matters to the people that I represent. Sports tourism is huge. That matters. Recreation matters. You have not only got the beaches but you have got this recreational tourism that exists in the ecosystem, where people can kayak on the Black River or visit some of our incredible botanical gardens. There are just so many things to do. So it is very important. I think this topic is very critical as well.

Mr. Karen, you estimate that permanent standard time would eliminate roughly 37 million rounds of golf and $1.6 billion in green fee revenue nationwide, while a permanent daylight savings time would add 23 million rounds of golf and about $1 billion. Can you translate what that might mean to a region like Myrtle Beach or some of the courses that you might see in Florida or elsewhere?

Mr. KAREN. Sure. So Myrtle Beach is one of the most mature and actually progressive golf markets in America. It was really the first true destination market for golf. If standard time was made permanent, it would cripple the spring, summer, and fall seasons in that market. So all those travelers that enjoy visiting Myrtle Beach either would not come because they couldn't get the 36 holes in a day that they used to, and it would have certainly a rippling effect in the economy there locally. It could be very damaging to a destination like Myrtle Beach if that was to be the case.

Mr. FRY. Thank you for that.

Ms. Maietta, how are we ensuring that we have a workforce scaled to meet heightened demand during major sporting events in the coming years?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you for that question, Congressman. I know you are a champion of H–2B visas, so I am going to talk about that some more.

I think that is critical, especially in places like Myrtle Beach and other places in South Carolina where it may be hard to get to and find that staffing that you need. Ensuring that we can rely on that program is essential to supporting a lot of our resort communities, far-flung destination communities.

Mr. FRY. Thank you for that. And, similarly, in your testimony, you note that for every hundred dollars that is spent at a hotel, $234 gets spent in the surrounding community. Can you walk us through what that might look like in a place like Myrtle Beach——

Ms. MAIETTA. Sure.

Mr. FRY [continuing]. Or Darlington for their Darlington 500 that they do? Who exactly is getting that, those dollars? Is it the waitress? Is it the golf caddy? Is it the boardwalk shops? I mean, how does that translate through a local economy?

Ms. MAIETTA. That is exactly right, and those are perfect examples. Yes, those extra dollars are going into the community. People

will come and go to a resort, but they will visit the bar across the way or the restaurant. They will stop in and buy some, you know, clothes. They will go to the mall.

So coming to one hotel destination means that the rest of the community is benefiting. And that is why you see, when hotels go up, they are supporting other small businesses. And so it is really the central fabric of a community.

Mr. FRY. Thank you for that.

Dr. Kleppe, your testimony notes studies linking daylight savings time shifts to more traffic accidents, workplace injuries, harsher sentencing, and even heart attacks and brain issues. If that is what is happening around the clock change, what is your best sense of how that might play out in a tourism town where people are driving long distances, working often odd or long hours, and relying on service workers?

Dr. KLEPPE. Yes, thank you, Congressman, for the question.

I mean, I think the evidence, you know, that you cited that we cite in our work and that we build off of is there is a pretty good consensus that any economic activity, including tourism, you know, including transportation, you know, driving, all the things you mentioned—those activities are likely to be harmed by these time shifts because of the cognitive impairment that we all experience and that we cannot counteract.

And so I think whenever you have, with tourism specifically, people traveling, working odd hours, certainly those could have economic impacts and safety consequences.

Mr. FRY. Thank you for that.

I see my time is expired, and I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The gentleman yields back.

Now we will recognize Mr. Evans from the great State of Colorado. Thanks for your patience, sir. You are a great Member. Thank you.

Mr. EVANS. Thanks, Chairman, Ranking Member. And, of course, thank you so much to our witnesses for coming.

And as the chairman said, I am from Colorado, born and raised. Big tourism State: Rocky Mountains, hunting, fishing, skiing, snowboarding, all of the different things that you can do in Colorado. Over $28 billion annually in our tourism industry.

We are typically a top-10 tourist destination of the 50 States, and so making sure that we have a good tourism industry, hotels, lodging—we have some fantastic golf courses—one of my first jobs was working at a golf course cleaning the golf carts—is critically important to me. But, unfortunately, we also know how fast, how quickly a good news story can go to being a bad news story.

Colorado is, unfortunately, the sixth most heavily regulated State in the country right now, and it is crushing our economy. Between February of last year and February of this year, Colorado's private sector lost 14,700 jobs. This is the second-largest decrease in the country.

During that same time period, employment in the State's public sector, so government jobs, grew by 15,200 jobs. That is the second-highest growth rate in the Nation. So our public sector is struggling in Colorado.

We are seeing the same thing, unfortunately, in crime statistics. I was a police officer in the Denver metro area for over 10 years. In 2011, when I started, Colorado was better than the national average for our crime rate. This year, we are the second most dangerous State in the country.

Denver—6 years ago, Denver didn't even make the top 50 most dangerous cities in the country list. And now we have seen Denver has had double the homicide rate per capita of San Francisco and is ranked the tenth most dangerous city in the country.

And so my question to Ms. Maietta is, can you comment on the impact that crime statistics like these have when people are traveling in from out of State, they are looking for a hotel, they are looking for someplace to stay? What is the impact that elevated crime rates like this have on your industry and the broader economy of the region?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you, Congressman, for that question.

Look, safety and security is our top priority for our guests and our employees. So ensuring that people feel safe when they are going to a hotel and visiting a city is important. And that is why we work really hard to create partnerships with local law enforcement, with city officials, with local government, to ensure that we are dealing with those issues around safety and security together and that business is part of the solution.

You have seen success stories like San Francisco, where they have tackled the issues of crime and safety and homelessness together with industry. Now, San Francisco, which was at the bottom of occupancy, is now rising up to becoming a top destination.

So there are pathways to making sure that people know what—you know, that markets are safe and that cities are safe to visit.

Mr. EVANS. Does your industry have any sort of statistics around correlation or causation? You see a dip in guests and in visitors when crime gets worse, the inverse happen when crime gets better. Do you have anything like that?

Ms. MAIETTA. I don't have that data top of mind, but I am sure we can look and share that with your staff.

Mr. EVANS. Fantastic. Moving a little bit more local in this line of questioning, what happens—you know, we have talked nationally. What happens at the local level when a hotel or some other sort of a lodging venue closes? Can you speak on the impact that that has on a local economy?

Ms. MAIETTA. Sure, absolutely. And, unfortunately, we have seen that all too well this year. You know, operating costs have risen 4 times faster than revenue in the last 5 years. And so what we are seeing is small businesses, which our industry is primarily made up of small businesses, simply can't afford to stay open. And so we have seen closures. That impacts jobs and that impacts the local community that relies on a hotel to create more economic flow.

Mr. EVANS. So that sixth most heavily regulated economy effect in the Nation and that bleeding of private-sector jobs, 14,700 private sector jobs lost—that is going to have a negative impact on your industry, correct?

Ms. MAIETTA. That is exactly right. And I think, you know, things like the American Franchising Act—60 percent of our indus-

try is franchised. And so passage of that law, which would bring some certainty to the industry, would be most helpful.

Mr. EVANS. I totally hear you there. I see my time is running short, so just appreciated your comments and the written testimony about the 199 passthrough deduction for small business and how important that is to keeping your business and our tourism economy strong.

I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

Now we will recognize Mrs. Houchin for her 5 minutes of questioning.

Mrs. HOUCHIN. Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis and Ranking Member Schakowsky, for holding this hearing. Thank you to our witnesses for being here and for offering your testimony.

I am happy to be here, Mr. Chairman, although I must admit I was a bit disappointed when I learned that this hearing wasn't about time travel tourism and that commas matter. I guess we will have to wait until technology catches up to our imaginations.

But in the meantime, we are focused today on something that is very real for my constituents: ending the twice-yearly ritual of changing clocks and making better use of the daylight we have.

I come from an area of Indiana where we used to refer to fast time and slow time, and I am a proud cosponsor of H.R. 139, the Sunshine Protection Act of 2025.

The bill is simple and true to its name. It would make daylight savings time the new standard time nationwide, putting that extra hour of light where families can actually use it, in the evening. We know that there are health implications and commerce implications, as well as safety implications, with the constant changing of our clocks. It is not an abstract issue for my constituents.

In a recent survey by text message, more than 90 percent of respondents said they want to stop changing the clocks and stick with one consistent schedule. They are tired of dark late afternoons in the winter, tired of disrupted sleep schedules for their kids, tired of the productivity hit and the confusion that comes with springing forward and falling back. In fact, we used to tell my kids, when it was still light outside and it was bedtime, that outside was closed, so we could get them to go to bed.

So with that in mind, I do want to turn to our witnesses.

Mr. Karen, I am interested in learning more about your perspective on the effects of the time changes themselves. I have mentioned some of those. What are some of the real-world downsides of our current spring-forward-and-fall-back system?

Mr. KAREN. So I only know the cursory research of the downside of the actual changing. We have heard it. It is economic. It is crime. Judges give harsher punishments the morning after clocks change than they do every other time of the year.

Mrs. HOUCHIN. Oh, my husband is a judge, so I wonder if that probably is. I will have to ask.

Mr. KAREN. Well, what we are learning is people are cranky and they are not sharp the day after the clocks change, and so that is—I don't study that, but I certainly have perspective on which to choose.

And so we are in favor of locking the clock and choosing a side, and in our case, you said it perfectly, to make better use of the sun.

Mrs. HOUCHIN. Yes.

Mr. KAREN. And Americans, they would rather recreate in the afternoons and the evenings than at 4, 5, 6 o'clock in the morning.

Mrs. HOUCHIN. I certainly am in that camp. But I also think that, from a safety perspective, this is an issue, and it is relevant to the commerce question that we have and how we are operating over time, and exactly health concerns for longevity if we are constantly switching our sleep schedules. Those are all factors that are important to consider.

Mr. Karen, if Congress were to adopt permanent daylight savings time, what benefits would you expect to see in communities where your members operate?

Mr. KAREN. Simply more Americans being outside walking around, playing sports, whether it is golf, tennis, pickleball, you name it, out there investing in their own health. And that is going to allow people to live longer, and that will have an economic impact on society as well. So——

Mrs. HOUCHIN. This is one of the issues, truly, we hear a lot about twice a year, and it is something that I hope we will be able to do.

My constituents certainly have made it clear that they do want one consistent system, more daylight in the evenings and an end to dark afternoons that cut into family time and hurt our local businesses.

The Sunshine Protection Act is practical. It is a bipartisan answer. It supports families, workers, and communities while putting an end to the disruptive clock changes.

I want to thank the committee again and to the witnesses for sharing your insights. I look forward to working together to hopefully make this happen. Thank you so much.

I yield back.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

Now we will recognize Mr. James from the great State of Michigan. You are recognized for your 5 minutes of questioning, sir.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate all the panelists being here today and I am looking forward to hearing from you about your perspective. These issues are not only important to the Nation but also our constituents.

Chairman Guthrie and Chairman Bilirakis, I couldn't agree with you more: Travel and tourism are key drivers to both our local and national economies. It is essential that we explore the best ways to strengthen and capitalize on these opportunities for our country.

But also, as we deal with other crises—mental health crises, seasonal depression, for northern States like mine, Michigan, places that are on the western side of the eastern time zone and farther north—we can address mental health issues by extending the time and the clock, potentially also saving lives.

I will get directly to my question. Mr. Kleppe, what other related research is relevant to the issue of financial and economic implications of daylight savings time policy that maybe you have not discussed as of yet?

Dr. KLEPPE. Yes. Thank you, Congressman, for that question.

I do have a brief summary prepared of some of the other relevant research, and so, you know, specifically to kind of economic and financial market effects of these biannual time shifts.

So beyond the evidence that we provided in our study of investors being impaired in their decision making and the effects that has on market efficiency, there is also recent research that finds that other economic and capital markets participants are negatively affected, including individuals that forecast earnings, which provides a very important information dissemination role to the capital markets. There is evidence that investors' reactions to merger announcements are worse after DST adjustments.

And one study that is not yet peer reviewed but is in the process that kind of gets at more of the maybe the personal household finance issue is that there is evidence now in this study that for loans that are applied for, including mortgage loans, after DST advances, that the default rates are higher, suggesting that contracting on loans is worse, which has not only, you know, corporate economic implications but also kind of personal household finance complications as well. So we——

Mr. JAMES. So you are saying that by addressing this issue we might also put a dent in the affordability issue around the country?

Dr. KLEPPE. Again, I can't speak directly to—this is not my research, but what I can say is that the impairment from these time shifts has the potential to, again, lead to worse contracting when it comes to loans and could hurt households in loan contracting.

Mr. JAMES. So let's step out into going from a little bit more micro to a little bit more macro.

Could you share the implications of reduced market efficiency caused by DST adjustments?

Dr. KLEPPE. Yes, that is a great question. So, first of all, I will say the U.S. is kind of the hallmark of—our capital markets are the hallmark of efficiency and sophistication, which sets us apart from the rest of the world. And so when markets become less efficient, there are implications for both investors and the companies seeking capital in those markets.

So on the investor side, less efficient markets means that determinations of value are harder. And individuals that have information advantages, usually more sophisticated or insider investors, can trade more profitably relative to retail investors, which creates disparities that are not good for markets.

And then on the company side, when there is, you know, more inefficiency, the cost of capital and raising capital and accessing those investors becomes more costly. And so that increased cost of capital impairs their, you know, companies' ability to invest and grow, and so for—obviously, which has broader economic concerns as well.

So for both investors and companies, and markets in general, inefficiency in markets is just bad. And there is a long—decades of research in accounting, finance, and economics that support that.

Mr. JAMES. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to Mr. Carter the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Thank you all for being here.

Folks, I have the honor and privilege of representing the First Congressional District of Georgia, which encompasses the entire coast of Georgia, over 110 miles of pristine coastline. Obviously, tourism is a big part of our economy. In fact, it is the number two—second-largest economic contributor to the State of Georgia.

In 2024, Georgia saw a record 174.2 million domestic and international visitors in total. And in 2024, visitors spent $45.2 billion—that is with a B—on Georgia's hotels, restaurants, transportation, and other local businesses. That saved each Georgia taxpayer—each Georgia household, I should say—over $1,200 in taxes, and that is significant.

And guess what? Next year, FIFA, the FIFA World Cup coming to Atlanta, the biggest sports event on the planet coming to Atlanta, Georgia. Goallllll! We are excited. We are very excited.

Ms. Maietta, what are your expectations for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, and how would they drive occupancy and revenue?

Ms. MAIETTA. Congressman, thank you for the question. You represent a stunning district and you have been a longtime industry champion. We are grateful for your support.

We are excited too about the World Cup. It will represent about $500 million in economic revenue for Georgia, and we are taking steps to ensure that we are collaborating with law enforcement and all stakeholders involved, local government officials, to make sure that we can have a seamless experience for all the guests who are coming and who can get to the games and enjoy the rest of Atlanta and that the State has to offer.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. Absolutely. In your opening testimony, you mentioned franchising several times. What can Congress do to support small business hotel owners and operators?

Ms. MAIETTA. Thank you for that question. I know you are a sponsor of the American Franchise Act. That bipartisan bill will be essential to bringing some certainty around joint employer standards.

Franchising accounts for—60 percent of our industry is made up of franchised hotel owners. It allows for the path to entrepreneurship in the American Dream for so many in our industry, and passage of that will alleviate some of that uncertainty related to who can make decisions around, you know, employees.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. Great.

Mr. Karen, I want to ask you, as we all know, Georgia is home to some world-famous golf courses, including the Master's in Augusta. And today, as a matter of fact, the RSM Classic starts where I live, on St. Simons Island, at the Seaside Course. So we are very excited about that. In 2024, golf's impact on the State of Georgia delivered over $5.3 billion worth of economic impact.

There is a lot of interest in year-round daylight savings time. In fact, the Georgia State Legislature passed a bill that would call for a permanent daylight savings time if Congress were to lift its prohibition on such a thing. It is called the Sunshine Protection Act.

How big of a difference would it make to the golf industry if Congress enacted permanent daylight savings time compared to our current twice-a-year clock changes?

Mr. KAREN. Well, first, I must mention I played in the RSM Classic pro-am three times.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. Is that right?

Mr. KAREN. And I enjoyed visiting your district to go do that. It is a great week. I wish I was there now.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. I hope you spend a lot of money.

Mr. KAREN. It is hard not to, "The Closer."

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. Yes.

Mr. KAREN. You know, our research indicates that if we had permanent daylight saving time, we would have at least a 1 percent uptick in economic activity in the golf industry. I mean, that is bare minimum. And I would—because that is not even counting private clubs. It is just public golf courses, and it is only green fees.

So if you add all of the other components, I would estimate that that change alone would give a 2 to 5 percent increase in the economy overnight because of the expansion of the inventory and the availability of people to play golf. Tee sheets are full right now. So if you added inventory, they would fill up. So it would be enormous to the State of Georgia.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. So tell me the downside. Why would people say it would have a negative effect?

Mr. KAREN. We have some in the industry who prefer the status quo and the changing of the clocks, because it slows down in the wintertime for them. Rounds are, you know, start going down. And they like giving their staff a break. It is a little bit of a reprieve to be able to go home at 4 o'clock.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. Can I interject?

Mr. KAREN. Yes.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. My middle son is a golf pro, and he is happy to see——

Mr. KAREN. There you go.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA [continuing]. Be able to get home a little earlier.

Mr. KAREN. Golf pros and superintendents don't—they are not as exuberant about this. I mean, they still favor it, but they are not as exuberant as the owners of the facilities that are looking to, obviously, maximize their business.

Be no different than if a restaurant said, "We are going to close now at 11 o'clock p.m. instead of 10 p.m." The staff would say, "Oh, you know, does that mean I have got to work longer hours or different shifts and so forth"? So I understand that tension.

And then there are very few golf courses that want permanent standard time. It is a single-digit percentage. And some of those are resorts, because they like the early play so that the golfers get into the dining room and eat dinner and spend their money on liquor and food.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. They don't do that.

Mr. KAREN. Yes, they do, sir. And also, there are a lot of clubs that favor retirees that love to play early in the morning. So they don't want to mess with the clock.

Mr. CARTER OF GEORGIA. Well, thank all of you. This is extremely important. And remember: Goallll!

Mr. BILIRAKIS. What happened to—I noticed you didn't mention the Georgia Bulldogs. I am OK with that, but I will give you some extra time if you want.

I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

So I think we are finished. No one on your side, no one on our side.

So I am going to ask unanimous consent to the documents on the staff—that the documents on the staff document list be submitted for the record. Without objection, so ordered.

And I remind Members that they have 10 business days to submit questions for the record, and I ask the witnesses to respond to the questions promptly. Members should submit their questions by the close of business day on December 5.

So I just want to thank all the witnesses. This was a fascinating hearing. It really was. And we learned a lot.

So, without objection, the subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:24 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Hearing entitled "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"
November 20, 2025

Documents for the Record

1. Rockport Analytics Full Report "The 2024 Economic & Fiscal Impact of Tourism in Florida," submitted by Chairman Bilirakis.[1]
2. Visit Florida's Integrated Marketing Effectiveness Results Summary for Fiscal Year 2024.25, submitted by Chairman Bilirakis.[1]
3. Letter to Representatives from Jay Pea, President, Save Standard Time, submitted by the Majority.
4. Statement from Dr. David Prerau, submitted by the Majority.
5. Letter to Chairman Bilirakis and Ranking Member Schakowsky from the Coalition for Permanent Standard Time, submitted by the Majority.
6. Letter to Chairmen Bilirakis and Guthrie and Ranking Members Schakowsky and Pallone from the National Religious Broadcasters, submitted by the Majority.
7. Letter to Chairman Bilirakis and Ranking Member Schakowsky from the American Society of Travel Advisors, submitted by the Majority.
8. Statement from Laura Chadwick, President and CEO, Travel Technology Association, submitted by the Majority.
9. Letter from Agudath Israel of America addressed to Members of the Subcommittee, submitted by the Minority.
10. Letter from the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA) addressed to Chairman Bilirakis and Ranking Member Schakowsky, submitted by the Minority.

[1] The report has been retained in committee files and is included in the Documents for the Record at http://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF17/20251120/118693/HHRG-119-IF17-20251120-SD003.pdf.

SAVE STANDARD TIME

2025 November 17

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
United States of America

Re: No on H.R.139. Amend permanent Daylight Saving Time to permanent Standard Time.

Dear Honorable Representatives,

Please reject permanent Daylight Saving Time (fast time), as proposed in legislation such as the Sunshine Protection Act, H.R.139. Please replace with permanent Standard Time (natural time), as supported by history and science, for health, safety, education, economy, and lasting public support.

Permanent Daylight Saving Time (DST) would be worse than the status quo. It would delay sunrise in most states past 8am (when most school/work starts) for 3+ months, and past 8:45am for 1+ weeks. It has failed repeatedly, with disruption to business and sometimes loss of life. DST is a fast clock, set an hour ahead of Standard Time. Moving clocks to DST acutely deprives sleep; leaving clocks on DST chronically deprives sleep. DST's circadian misalignment increases accidents, illnesses, and health costs. It decreases learning, productivity, and earnings. Permanent DST wouldn't alleviate these harms, it would magnify them. It would deprive sunlight from mornings, when it's needed most by working families. It would revert benefits of starting school later. It would increase residential heating and air conditioning. It would delay AM radio news broadcasts until most people begin work. It would disrupt sun-timed prayers. It can't turn winter into summer, it can only mandate waking earlier and sleeping less.

Permanent Standard Time is the safest, fairest, most healthful, and most lasting way to end clock changes. Standard Time is the honest clock, set to the sun, known as natural time or God's time. Standard Time balances morning and evening sunlight fairly for all. Its benefits to circadian health naturally improve immunity, longevity, mood, alertness, and performance in school, sports, and work. Standard Time protects start times and preserves the morning sunlight that's essential for schoolchildren, commuters, outdoor laborers, and service personnel. It lets most people sleep naturally past dawn most days, and it makes bedtimes easier for families. Most states enjoyed permanent Standard Time during peacetime for eight decades before1966. Arizona, Hawaii, all five US territories, and most nations have enjoyed it during peacetime for well over a century. Most of Mexico restored permanent Standard Time in 2022. More states now have permanent Standard Time bills than ever before. Gallup finds half of Americans support permanent Standard Time, compared to only a quarter for permanent DST. Government should set clocks as objectively as possible (to the sun), and let businesses and individuals set schedules from there.

Countless organizations and advocates on the right and left oppose DST and endorse permanent Standard Time. Among these are the American Academy of Neurology, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, American College of Chest Physicians, American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, American Thoracic Society, National Safety Council, National Sleep Foundation, Sleep Research Society, Society for Research on Biological Rhythms, editorial boards of *Bloomberg*, *Minnesota Star Tribune*, *Oregonian*, *Orlando Sentinel*, the Independent Institute, National Religious Broadcasters, contributors to *Breaking Points*, Cato, Daily Wire, Human Events, PragerU, and more.

Please hear the nonpartisan consensus of history and science. We can't protect sunshine, but we must protect sleep. Save time, money, and lives. End the harms of artificial DST. Restore naturally healthful permanent Standard Time.

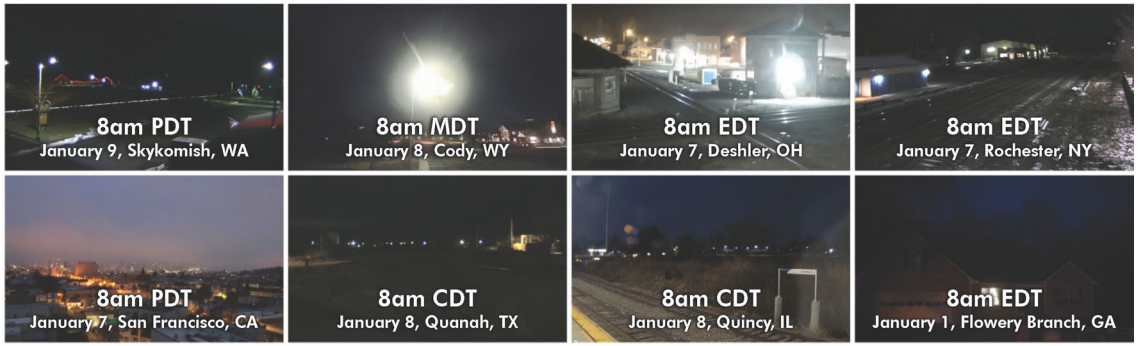
Sincerely,

Jay Pea
President
jay@savestandardtime.com
Citations: savestandardtime.com/summary

PERMANENT STANDARD TIME (NATURAL TIME) KEEPS SUNRISE BEFORE WORK/SCHOOL



PERMANENT DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME (FAST TIME) FORCES PRE-SUNRISE START TIMES



Median work arrival time is 7:55am, per the US Census Bureau in 2014. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/which-cities-sleep-in-and-which-get-to-work-early/ • Average school start time is 8:03am, per the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention in 2015. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm

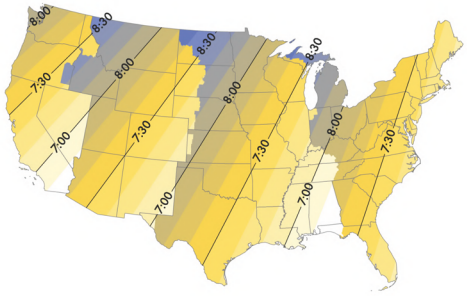
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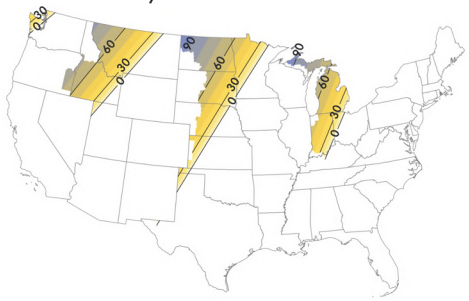
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PERMANENT STANDARD TIME (NATURAL TIME) PRESERVES MORNING LIGHT

Time of Latest Sunrises

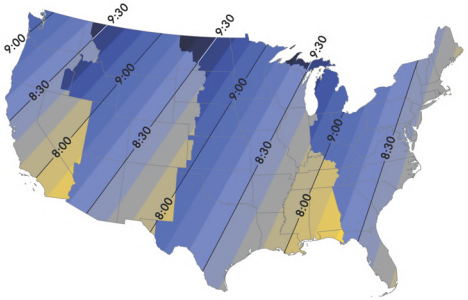


Days with Post-8am Sunrise

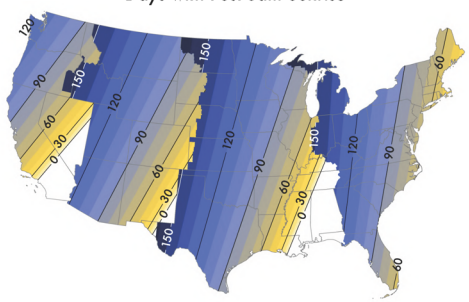


PERMANENT DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME (FAST TIME) MAKES SUNRISE TOO LATE

Time of Latest Sunrises



Days with Post-8am Sunrise



Morning sunlight is essential to health, mood, safety, learning, and productivity.
Most work and school days in the United States start at or before 8am. Latest winter sunrises occur from late December to mid-January.

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PERMANENT DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME COST LIVES & MONEY IN 1974



Schoolgirl Hurt; Accident Blamed On Time Change

ARDMORE (AP) — Daylight Saving Time was blamed Wednesday for the injury of a 7-year-old girl.

School superintendent Bill Ware said Portia Gates was struck by a car as she ran across a street to catch a school bus at 8 a.m. The driver of the car said he didn't see the girl in the darkness.

Ware ordered classes started a half hour later beginning Monday.

The girl was reported doing well at a local hospital with head and arm injuries and a broken leg.

Bids to kill daylight time heard

By ALBERT SEHLSTEDT, JR.
Washington Bureau of The Sun

Washington—There were serious moves in Congress yesterday to repeal year-around daylight saving time, which went into effect only three weeks ago as an energy-saving measure.

Congressmen in both houses expressed concern over school children who have been engaged on roads and highways during the dark morning hours of winter.

Children's deaths spur bid to repeal daylight saving

DAYLIGHT, from A1

one-day session solely to deal with the daylight saving time issue.

In the United States Senate, Marlow W. Cook (R., Ky.) rose in support of repealing the year-round daylight saving plan, cleared by Congress December 14, and cited the Florida deaths, plus a reported increase in sexual assaults on youngsters in Minnesota and problems in other states.

Senator Dick Clark (D., Iowa), sponsor of one of the

Representative Claude Pepper (D., Fla.), who, along with most of the Florida delegation, is supporting repeal, said last week that "the small savings in energy that we will make do not justify the loss of lives of our children nor the hardship placed upon our children and their parents.

"I regret for others their loss of benefit from energy that would be saved in the country and from extra time at the end of the day, but the lives of our children should

Girl, 6, Critically Injured in Accident

A 6-year-old Tulsa girl was struck by a car and critically injured Wednesday as she neared a school bus stop at Virgin Street and Trenton Avenue in Daylight Saving Time dark.

Kelly Hines, daughter of Beverly Williams of 2133 N. St. Louis Ave., remained in the intensive care unit of Hillcrest Medical Center Wednesday night.

She received a fractured

ago after two children were killed and two others injured by cars near Woods.

NEWSPAPER FILES AND Traffic Engineering Department records show that a 5-year-old boy was killed near the Trenton-Virgin intersection in May, 1972, and that there have been two other pedestrian accidents in the vicinity of the intersection since 1970.

The word "School" was

Daylight Savings 'Unreasonable'

By BOB GUENTHER
Star Staff Writer

Minneapolis — Midwestern governors, including Nebraska's J. James Exon, Wednesday told federal energy administrator John Sawhill they approve of the fuel conservation measures his office has mandated — except for year-round Daylight Savings Time.

North Dakota Gov. Arthur Link told Sawhill, "Please, don't ask us to live with Daylight Savings Time again this winter. We've responded to all other regulations, but this one is unreasonable in the northern climates."

Link doubted any savings resulted, since he noted that on cold, dark mornings this past winter many North Dakota parents drove their children to school instead of letting them wait for a bus.

Distributes Usage

Sawhill defended the Daylight Savings approach, saying it distributes kilowatt usage more evenly over a day and cuts down on the need for power companies to use peak generating units

still supports year-round Daylight Savings Time; he estimated it cut the nation's fuel usage by 5% last winter.

governors and stated that Nebraskans are not "sold" on year-round Daylight Savings.

The governors unanimously passed a resolution asking the federal government to abandon Daylight Savings during winter months.

The only concession made by Sawhill was a statement indicating he favors keeping the 55 m.p.h. speed limit more than Daylight Savings.

"The 55 m.p.h. speed limit should become permanent to save both lives and fuel," Sawhill said. He estimated that the 55 m.p.h. limit has saved

however, will remain in short supply, as will coal if a strike by the United Mine Workers materializes.

Nevertheless, Sawhill said the administration has no plans to continue mandatory fuel allocation beyond the February 28, 1975, expiration date.

The governors want to keep the allocation program. Iowa Gov. Robert Ray said, "It's our only method of solving emergency situations at the local level."

Sawhill replied, "We're not going . . . to leave you without the tools to move fuel into critical areas . . . We would renew allocations in the event of a coal strike."

hours of darkness. Thomas said.

He said the traffic engineering department has requested funds to replace the non-reflective signs with reflective signs, but replacement could not be made until this summer.

Wednesday's accident was the second predawn injury here to a school child since DST was adopted nationally Jan. 6 at the urging of President Nixon.

A 14-year-old boy was hurt Jan. 21 when hit by an auto in the 9400 block of East 51st

School children, workers

Daylight saving move leaves many in dark

Darkness reigned for an extra hour this morning on the first work day under new daylight saving hours invoked Sunday to conserve the nation's energy.

For day shift workers who normally rise at 6 a.m. to begin work at 7 a.m. there was little difference. Industries here reported no more than the usual Monday morning absenteeism and lateness.

Children, however, had to meet their school buses in darkness, confronting traffic still relying on headlights. School officials said there were no accidents, school buses were on time and their fears of trouble were unfounded—for today at least.

Robert W. Maroni, assistant superintendent of North Adams schools, said there has been an intensive safety campaign at all schools in preparation for the time shift because officials "are deeply concerned" about traffic dangers in the darkness.

Business at all the morning coffee shops was normal except at the Dunkin' Donuts shop on Union Street where a spokesman said, "It's been one of the worst days we've ever had."

Or so it seemed until he checked cash sales which were only slightly below normal rates for a Monday. He said,

nonetheless, that customers were fewer—especially young people. He said even traffic at the busy intersection of Union and Eagle streets seemed below normal.

Business at the Capitol restaurant and the Wm. Tally House was only slightly less than normal. The only difference made by daylight saving hours was common grumbling about having to rise in darkness.

Business was usual at Nassif's professional pharmacy coffee bar where most customers said only that the time shift came suddenly for them. Theirs

DST BRINGS SWITCH

Road Crews Start One Hour Later

The midwinter switch to Daylight Saving Time has forced county road-building and repairing crews to their working that daylight will ble.

Commissioners Richardson and nch said Thurs- as of Monday way crews began later than usual working in the

dark.

Richardson said his crews are starting to work at 8:30 a.m. instead of 7:30 as they have in the past.

Can't Work in Dark

Lynch said his men had come to work at 8 a.m. until Monday, but they now begin at 8:30.

"They can't work in the dark," Richardson said. "They work around heavy equipment and sometimes work in traffic.

"We don't want to get someone killed because a driver couldn't see them in the dark."

"And it's no good having them sit in the yards until it gets light. That costs the county money. So we just rescheduled their working hours," he said.

Employees Complain

Lynch said private road contractors will probably change the working hours for their employees also if they haven't already done so.

Lynch said many courthouse employees are complaining about driving to work in the dark also but

Time Change ot Seen

Y — A Cim- commission- day there was d fellow com- could change e from Cen- t Time to e, although a residents had y. uggested out me people," ith said, "but s can't make a time change."

The People Speak

School Children Exposed to Danger

TO THE EDITOR:

Like most Americans, I can accept the restrictions to conserve our country's energies.

But for the life of me, I am unable to figure out how this daylight savings time can be of any benefit.

As a former student of the Ohnishima drivers training program, we were taught from the drivers manual that dusk-to-dawn driving is the most dangerous. This is a fact!

This time change has put many more drivers on the roads in the dark. These people, on the old time, drove in the full light in order to be to work at 8 or 9 a.m. This makes accident probabilities much higher.

Children are walking to school, or waiting for buses in the dark, thus exposing them to the danger of drivers. This adds one more worry for parents, who are burdened and worried with day to day living and jobs they may or may not be able to keep.

Why in the world does the time change have to be.

Praise Electricity

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm sure there are a lot of folks just like me who are real thankful for our electric lights this morning. We can see our way to get around, what with this new time and all.

There's a school right across from my house and they have their lights shining brightly for the children. Then, too, our cars have their lights on bringing youngsters to school and that yard-long bus looks like a Christmas tree!

How the new time will help the energy crisis I don't know.

Hazel D. Carothers, Cushing

Two Crises Exist

TO THE EDITOR:

John Q. Public is accustomed to injustices. His motor vehicles have been swallowed up by emission control devices which not only reduce fuel consumption from 7 to 20 percent but in terms of dollars and cents cost him in the neighborhood

Change Backwards

TO THE EDITOR:

It seems that our lawmakers in Washington have done it again. They have changed our clocks to fit their needs—professing to save fuel. But as anyone knows, it is backwards. To start with we are turning our thermostats up an hour earlier each morning. This will use more fuel because it is always coldest from about 4 a.m. until 7 a.m. (Sunrise).

Now everyone gets off work one hour earlier (by Sunrise) so they have one more hour to drive around each evening before dark, using more fuel.

We are helping the energy crisis like a hole in the head or as an California politician said a while back, "This time change causes the sun to shine on his lawn an hour longer each day."

Every politician should be voted out, and replaced with some hard working farmers who understand nature, and I believe we could get

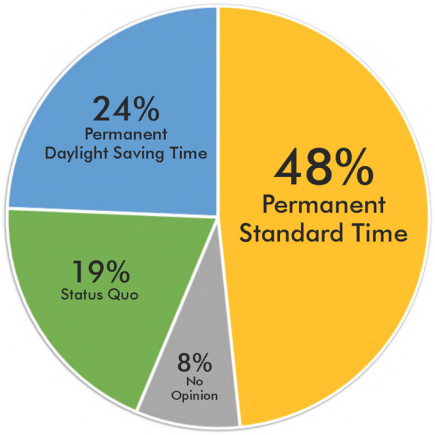
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PERMANENT STANDARD TIME IS MOST POPULAR



Gallup (2025):

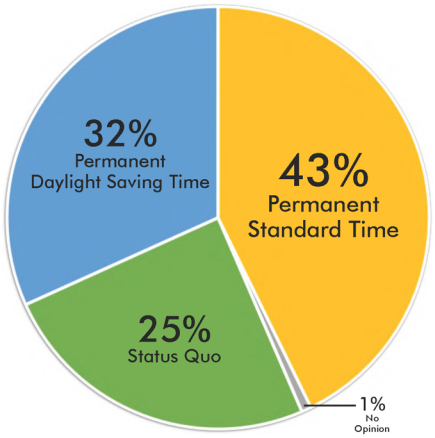
"The plurality of Americans, 48%, prefer Standard Time the whole year, including summer. Half as many, 24%, prefer Daylight Saving Time the whole year, including winter. The smallest percentage, 19%, prefer the status quo of switching between the two.

"This means 43% favor having Daylight Saving Time part of the year or year-round, slightly less than the 48% who would prefer not to have it at all. But it also means 72% would prefer no clock changes each year."

"Based on telephone interviews January 21–27, 2025, with a random sample of 1,001 adults, living in all 50 states and DC. Margin of error ±4%."

https://news.gallup.com/poll/657584/half-daylight-saving-time-sunsetted.aspx

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AP–NORC (2021):

"Most Americans want to skip changing clocks. 43% want to stay on Standard Time year-round, while 32% prefer to remain on Daylight Saving Time. Only 25% percent like shifting between Daylight Saving Time in summer and Standard Time in winter.

"Daylight Saving Time year-round is more popular among adults age 60+ (37%) than those 18–29 (24%). Adults age 18–29 are more likely than those age 60+ to prefer to switch back and forth (32% vs 22%)."

"Nationwide poll October 21–25, 2021, using the probability-based panel at the University of Chicago. Online, landline, and cell phone interviews with 1,083 adults. Margin of error ±4.0%.

https://apnorc.org/projects/dislike-for-changing-the-clocks-persists/

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POSITION STATEMENTS FOR PERMANENT STANDARD TIME

American Academy of Sleep Medicine

"The United States should eliminate seasonal time changes in favor of permanent Standard Time, which aligns best with human circadian biology. Evidence supports distinct benefits of Standard Time for health and safety, while also underscoring harms from seasonal time changes. By causing the human body clock to be misaligned with the natural environment, Daylight Saving Time increases risks to our physical health, mental well-being…"

Bloomberg

"Standard Time is better aligned with the position of the sun and human nature. It generally synchronizes waking with sunrise and bedtime with darkness, in accordance with circadian rhythms. It enables children and adults to go to school and work in daylight. Daylight Saving Time effectively does the reverse…"

Canadian Sleep Research Consortium

"Natural time, defined by the sun, is the best option for health, mood, safety, education, and productivity. Why abolish Daylight Saving Time? The issue of time change is complex, but the evidence is clear: It is in the best interests of public health to abolish time change and maintain Standard Time permanently…"

Canadian Sleep Society

"Optimal sleep and optimal alignment of the human circadian clock with daytime activities is achieved with Standard Time. Not only does Daylight Saving Time induce sleep deprivation at its inception in the spring, but it enforces later darkness during the summer, favoring delayed bedtime, social jet lag, and more sleep loss…"

Canadian Society for Chronobiology

"Standard Time puts the social clock closer to our intrinsic body clock, our circadian rhythm, which is set by the dawn. Daylight Saving Time moves dawn later, and creates social jet lag due to mismatch between our biological drive to wake up near dawn and the social demands for us to stay up later…"

The Minnesota Star Tribune

"To make Daylight Saving Time permanent would be a mistake… Standard Time is the clear choice. It provides more early daylight and most closely aligns with the body's natural wake–work–sleep rhythms. Misalignment has been linked to increased cardiovascular disease risk, metabolic syndrome, and other health risks…"

National Sleep Foundation

"Circadian biologists support permanent Standard Time, citing importance of light in the morning… Daylight Saving Time forces biological clocks out of sync with the rising and setting of the sun. The link between biological clock and sun is crucial to health… Seasonal time changes are disruptive. Evidence supports permanent Standard Time because of its alignment with our circadian biology and relevance to sleep health and safety…"

The Oregonian

"For Oregonians, keeping clocks on Daylight Saving Time year-round would mean sunrise after 8am for 106 days each year… Make sure Oregon remains in Standard Time. The marginal benefit of an extra hour of light during a limited number of summer evenings is not worth spending a third of the year's mornings in darkness…"

Sleep Research Society

"Daylight Saving Time causes sleep loss, circadian misalignment, dysregulation of melatonin and cortisol, stress, altered metabolism, and inflammation. This would occur year-round if Daylight Saving Time were permanent. The evidence supports abolishing Daylight Saving Time and adopting permanent Standard Time…"

Society for Research on Biological Rhythms

"Based on comparisons of large populations living in Daylight Saving Time or Standard Time, or on western versus eastern edges of time zones, advantages of permanent Standard Time outweigh switching to Daylight Saving Time annually or permanently… To improve human health, we should not fight our body clock…"

South Florida Sun Sentinel

"We agree Congress should end the twice-a-year annoyance of changing clocks. The loss of an hour from the shift to Daylight Saving Time is especially hard. The better change, though, would be to make Standard Time—what farmers once called God's time—permanent. As experts pointed out, it's the natural way to go…"

More at: savestandardtime.com/statements

SAVE STANDARD TIME

Endorsements of Permanent Standard Time as the Best Year-Round Clock

The following endorse permanent Standard Time (natural time), not permanent Daylight Saving Time (fast time), as the best way to end clock change. This list is non-comprehensive. More at: savestandardtime.com/endorsements

Health

Alabama Board of Medical Examiners & Licensure
Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy
American Academy of Cardiovascular Sleep Medicine
American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head & Neck
American Academy of Sleep Medicine
American Association of Public Health Physicians
American Association of Sleep Technologists
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Lifestyle Medicine
American Medical Association
American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery
American Thoracic Society
California Medical Association
California Sleep Society
California State Association of Psychiatrists
Canadian Sleep Research Consortium
Canadian Sleep Society
Canadian Society for Chronobiology
Capitol Neurology
Dakota Sleep Society
Hampden District Medical Society
Illinois Sleep Society
Indiana State Medical Association
Kansas Chiropractic Association
Kentucky Sleep Society
Kimmey Lab, University of California, Santa Cruz
Massachusetts Medical Society
Michigan Academy of Sleep Medicine
Missouri Sleep Society
Montana Sleep Society
National Sleep Foundation
Nebraska Medical Association
Nevada Public Health Association
Northwest Noggin Neuroscience
Rhode Island Medical Society
San Diego Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
San Diego Psychiatric Society
Sleep Research Society
Society for Light, Rhythms, & Circadian Health
Society for Research on Biological Rhythms
Society of Anesthesia & Sleep Medicine
Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine
Southern Sleep Society
Tennessee Sleep Society
Texas Neurological Society
Texas Society of Sleep Professionals
Wisconsin Sleep Society
World Sleep Society

Education & Families

Anne Arundel County Public Schools
Colorado Parent–Teacher Association
Florida Parent–Teacher Association
League of Women Voters, Delaware Cty, Pennsylvania
Maryland Association of Boards of Education
National Parent–Teacher Association
Nevada Association for the Education of Young Children
Regional Adolescent Sleep Needs Coalition
Start School Later

Safety & Labor

American College of Occupational/Environmental Med
Association of Canadian Ergonomists
B-Society
Daylight Academy
Good Light Group
National Safety Council
Nebraska State Grange
Solaris Fatigue Management
USA Weather, Dallas–Fort Worth, Texas

News Editorial Boards

Bloomberg Opinion
The Daytona Beach News-Journal
The Economist
The Minnesota Star Tribune
The Oregonian
Orlando Sentinel
South Florida Sun Sentinel

General

California Islamic University
Catholic Frequency
Independent Institute
Indiana Chamber of Commerce
Kansas Association of Broadcasters
Libertarian Party Mises Caucus
National Religious Broadcasters
Rabbinical Council of America

Endorsement of permanent Standard Time policy is not endorsement of Save Standard Time Inc.

SAVE STANDARD TIME

	Permanent Daylight Saving Time (Fast Time)	Permanent Standard Time (Natural Time)
Morning Sunlight	Forces most people to start school or work before sunrise in winter.	Lets most people see light in morning (when biology needs it most) year-round.
Circadian Alignment	Misaligns clocks from circadian rhythms.	Aligns clocks to circadian rhythms.
Sleep Health	Forces most people to wake by alarm before dawn in autumn, winter, and spring. Dark mornings make waking harder. Light at night makes sleep harder.	Lets most people sleep naturally past dawn year-round. Bright mornings make waking easier. Darkness at night makes sleep easier.
Mental & Physical Health	Increases depression, substance abuse, obesity, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.	Improves mood, neurological health, stress resilience, weight balance, heart health, immunity, and longevity.
Safety & Crime	Increases accidents and injury recovery times.	Improves alertness and decision-making.
Education & Economy	Impairs school performance. Decreases workplace productivity and wages.	Improves school performance. Increases workplace productivity and wages.
Farmers & Construction Workers	Shortens morning light needed for outdoor labor and all-day alertness.	Preserves morning light needed for outdoor labor and all-day alertness.
Energy & Environment	Darker mornings increase demand for morning heat. Brighter evenings increase demand for evening A/C.	Balances the sun's light and heat between morning and evening, for less demand, less expense, and less waste.
Radio Broadcasts	Dark mornings impair radio. News broadcasts would be delayed until most people have begun work.	Preserves morning light needed for radio broadcasts of morning news and traffic reports.
Religious Rights	Unfairly overlaps work hours with morning prayer times of observant worshippers.	Many faiths call Standard Time "God's Time" for its connection to the natural world (to creation).
Federal Law	Prohibited by the Uniform Time Act (15 USC §260a).	Approved for states by the Uniform Time Act (15 USC §260a).
Lasting Public Support	Repeatedly tried and reverted after winter is experienced in the US and other nations.	Observed in Arizona, Hawaii, all five US territories, and most nations for many decades.

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Statement for the House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Current U.S. DST System is Better than the Alternatives

By Dr. David Prerau, daylight saving time analyst and author

November 2025

Whether to retain or to change America's daylight saving time (DST) system is a more complex question than it might initially seem. It requires a thorough evaluation and comparison of the current DST system against the alternative approaches. Adopting either Permanent DST or Permanent Standard Time might seem appealing, but both have significant drawbacks. Our current DST system, with its faults, is better than either alternative.

Eliminating our current DST system would allow Americans to avoid clock changes on two nights each year. But, for that gain, they must choose either: Having DST all winter with four months where most people would be commuting to work or school on dark, cold mornings—or, instead, losing numerous benefits of spring-to-fall DST, including 240 beautiful long evenings.

When evaluating DST, many focus solely on issues related to the clock changes and do not examine the significant benefits that those clock changes provide throughout the months after each change. Our current system offers DST's many benefits for most of the year while avoiding winter DST's problems in the darkest, coldest months.

Consider permanent daylight time. This is not a new idea. It was tried for the entire country, lost favor nationally, and was soon discontinued.

A 1974 national energy crisis led the government to install a temporary two-year period of nationwide permanent DST. But winter DST rapidly became quite unpopular. People disliked dark winter mornings for waking and going to work and especially for sending children to school on dark city streets or waiting for buses on dark rural roads. The public favored DST—but not November through February. Congress concurred and eliminated the planned second year of permanent DST—even though it would have automatically terminated after that second year.

Permanent DST shifts already-late winter sunrises one hour later—sunrises around 8:30am in New York, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, and San Francisco, 9am in Columbus, Indianapolis, Detroit, Minneapolis, and Seattle, and 9:30am or even later in some areas. Many workers and students would commute each morning in full darkness, and their winter mornings would be colder, with many leaving home before sunrise.

Winter DST would cause significant difficulties for certain religious groups that meet each morning to pray after sunrise but before work. Also, experts on circadian rhythms state that dark mornings negatively impact health more than dark evenings, as daylight soon after waking is important.

The second proposed alternative, permanent standard time, sacrifices numerous benefits provided by eight months of DST. Many studies demonstrate that spring-to-fall DST reduces traffic fatalities, decreases outdoor crime, and lowers energy consumption. It also has health benefits and improves public health and quality of life by encouraging outdoor activities for an extra hour for each of 240 evenings. Morning negative effects of DST would be minimal since most people would awaken or leave their house after sunrise.

Under permanent standard time, many spring and summer sunrises would occur extremely early, while most sleep: Boston, New York, Nashville, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Portland would have sunrises before 4:30am, and Washington DC, Cleveland, Kansas City, and Los Angeles before 5am. Most Americans would sleep through morning sunshine for several months. Our current DST system each day relocates one of those wasted early morning hours of sunshine to a much more usable evening hour.

A 1966 federal law allows every state the individual option to use permanent standard time. Yet only two states have opted for it—for unique reasons: Hawaii, the state closest to the equator, has small annual variation in daylight hours, reducing DST's advantages. Arizona's extreme summer heat discourages the desire for additional summer daylight—instead Arizonans prefer venturing outdoors after sunset when it is somewhat cooler.

The biannual clock changes would be eliminated by both alternatives to current DST. While many people quickly adjust to the DST clock changes, many others find clock changes troublesome. But the effects of DST clock changes often last only a few days, while summer DST's benefits extend 240 days and winter standard time's benefits last 120 days.

The forward clock change is similar to traveling one time zone east (e.g., Chicago to New York, Los Angeles to Denver, London to Paris, Beijing to Tokyo), which multitudes do worldwide, on their own, every day.

Regarding some claimed health effects, a major 2024 Mayo Clinic nationwide study of 36 million adults over five years found no significant link between DST and heart attack or strokes. Assessing DST, "there is no need to take concerns regarding heart health into account."

Instead of altering the DST system, other strategies could minimize any negative effects of the clock changes. For example, travelers often prepare for time zone changes by shifting their sleep schedules in advance. Similarly, public service campaigns could signal upcoming DST clock changes and encourage earlier bedtimes and more sleep on the days near the change.

In conclusion, rather than adopting either permanent DST or permanent standard time—both with significant drawbacks—the current DST system offers a very reasonable compromise. It delivers considerable benefits throughout the year while avoiding problems posed by either proposed alternative, thus providing the best of both.

Dr. David Prerau is an internationally known expert on daylight saving time and has been called "The Foremost Authority on DST" by *The New York Times* and several others. He is the author of "*Seize the Daylight: The Curious and Contentious Story of Daylight Saving Time*," which *The Economist* cited as "the definitive book on daylight saving time." Dr. Prerau is co-author of three major U.S. government technical studies on DST and has been a DST consultant for the U. S. Congress and the British Parliament.

Dr. David Prerau





November 20, 2025

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Bilirakis:

On behalf of the Coalition for Standard Time, we appreciate the opportunity to submit comments for the record regarding the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade hearing, *"Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism."* We commend the subcommittee for addressing this important issue; however, we had hoped that the medical, scientific, and safety community might have had the opportunity to testify on this critical topic. We encourage Congress to eliminate seasonal time changes and adopt permanent **standard time**, which best supports public health and safety.

The Coalition for Standard Time supports the elimination of biannual clock change in March and November through restoration of permanent standard time and not permanent daylight saving time. The Coalition represents various interests and industries united around establishing permanent standard time in the United States. The founding organizational members of the coalition are the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, National Sleep Foundation, Save Standard Time, Sleep Research Society, and Society for Research on Biological Rhythms.

In the United States, the annual advance to daylight saving time (DST) in spring, and fall back to standard time in autumn, is required by law (although statute allows for states to choose permanent standard time). In recent years, the chorus to eliminate the biannual clock change has exploded, and in a 2025 Gallop poll, the plurality of respondents preferred standard time over DST or the status quo by a two-to-one margin.

It is the position of the Coalition that the United States should eliminate seasonal time changes in favor of permanent standard time, which aligns best with human circadian biology. Evidence supports the distinct benefits of standard time for health and safety, while also underscoring the potential harms that result from seasonal time changes to and from DST. The clock change can cause misalignment between the biological clock and environmental clock, resulting in

significant health and public safety-related consequences, both in the days immediately following the annual "spring forward" to DST as well as throughout the entire time on DST.

Shifting from standard time to DST each spring has been associated with increased cardiovascular morbidity, including risk of myocardial infarction,[i,ii] stroke,[iii] and hospital admissions due to the occurrence of acute atrial fibrillation.[iv] An increase in missed medical appointments and increased emergency room visits and return visits to the hospital are also seen only during the spring transition from standard time to DST.[v,vi] In addition, a study published in 2021 by Mayo Clinic researchers found an 18.7% increase in adverse medical events related to human error in the week after switching to DST.[vii] Traffic accidents increase in the first few days after the change from standard time to DST,[viii] with an increase in fatal crashes of up to 6% in the United States.[ix]

The one-hour shift in the spring results in less exposure to light in the morning and greater exposure to evening light. In the presence of continuing social or occupational demands in early morning hours, this delay results in sleep loss and resultant sleep debt,[x] in addition to circadian misalignment. The result is a variety of cellular derangements, including altered myocyte gene expression,[xi] altered epigenetic and transcriptional profile of core clock genes,[xii] increased production of inflammatory markers,[xiii] lower vagal tone resulting in higher heart rate and blood pressure, and reduced sleep.[xiv]

The short-term harms caused by the clock changes does not mean that stopping the clock with permanent daylight saving time would be better, because the increased misalignment of the clock with the sun especially during short winter months is more harmful. Instead, changing to permanent standard time would lead to a decrease in the prevalence of stroke and obesity. The more naturally aligned clock time of permanent standard time would also result in lower heart disease, cancer, seasonal depression and suicide throughout the year. Brain health would also improve including lower fatal car crashes and higher SAT scores.

The long, dark mornings caused by permanent daylight saving time would make it difficult to wake and commute to school and work during the winter. The safety of children waiting at the bus stop, walking, or driving to school would be jeopardized by the darkness and by drowsy driving. These concerns caused public support for permanent daylight saving time to plummet after Congress enacted the Emergency Daylight Saving Time Energy Conservation Act of 1973. After experiencing just one winter of permanent daylight saving time, Congress reversed course by reinstating standard time during the winter months, beginning in November 1974.

As the Coalition for Standard Time Co-Chair Karin Johnson, MD, concluded in her testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Technology hearing on the clock change:

"Permanent standard time offers a balanced approach that aligns with our natural circadian rhythms, improves health, safety, and productivity, and eliminates the harmful and unpopular effects of seasonal clock changes. While daylight saving time may seem beneficial on the surface, it brings substantial costs to our well-being and inefficiencies to our economy."

We appreciate the committee's attention to this issue, as we believe the evidence clearly demonstrates the need to eliminate seasonal time changes and the establishment of permanent standard time. By causing the human body clock to be misaligned with the natural environment, DST increases risks to our physical health, mental well-being, and public safety. Accordingly, the Coalition urges Congress to pass legislation eliminating DST and making standard time permanent for the entire year. Please contact Eric Albrecht at (630) 737-9700 or ealbrecht@aasm.org with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Coalition for Permanent Standard Time

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NRB
An Association of
Christian Communicators

800 Maryland Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 543-0073

11/19/25

To:
The Honorable Gus Bilirakis, Chairman of the Subcommittee
The Honorable Jan Schakowsky, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee
The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chairman of the Full Committee
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member of the Full Committee

Re:
LETTER FOR THE RECORD
Submitted for the Hearing: "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, andTourism"
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), which represents more than 1,100 Christian radio, television, and digital media organizations across all 50 states, thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter for the record.

NRB strongly opposes the *Sunshine Protection Act of 2025* and proposals to make Daylight Saving Time (DST) permanent. While today's hearing will analyze issues impacting travel, tourism, and economic activity, permanent DST carries significant and well-documented consequences for public safety, local broadcasting, and emergency communications.

I. Technical and Regulatory Realities of AM Radio
A majority of AM radio stations operate under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licenses that require them to reduce power, limit coverage, or alter their directional signal patterns between sunset and sunrise. These requirements are rooted not in outdated regulation but in immutable engineering reality:

- At night, the ionosphere reflects AM signals back to earth, causing skywave propagation that can interfere with distant stations hundreds of miles away.
- Power reductions and directional patterns protect the integrity and safety of the entire AM band.

If DST were made permanent, sunrises would occur one hour later year-round compared to Standard Time (ST). During the months when we normally rely on ST—early November through mid-March—morning daylight would be pushed even later, with some communities seeing sunrises well after 8:00 a.m. This would force AM broadcasters to remain on low power

NRB
An Association of
Christian Communicators

800 Maryland Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 543-0073

(or completely off-air for 'daytimer' stations) during much of the winter morning drive—the single most important programming and revenue window in radio.

II. Real-World Public Safety Consequences
Many members on this committee recognize AM radio's unique resilience and its indispensable role in America's emergency communications infrastructure. Permanent DST would not change the critical nature of AM radio; it would simply prevent the system you worked to protect from operating at full strength during the morning hours, reducing its reach and ability to serve local communities. This is not a deficiency of AM radio itself, but a predictable engineering consequence of changing federal time policy.

The consequences are clear:

- Emergency information—weather alerts, school closings, road conditions, evacuation notices—would be harder to deliver during the hours when millions of Americans are on the road.
- Public safety officials, who rely on AM broadcasters for real-time situational coordination, would face reduced coverage precisely when it is needed most.
- Parents and students would encounter darker, riskier morning commutes, one of the major reasons Congress quickly reversed the 1974 permanent DST experiment.

Permanent DST does not make AM radio less essential. It simply undermines the nation's ability to access it when it matters most.

III. Economic and Local Community Impact
Morning drive is not just a programming block, it is the economic engine that sustains local radio. Morning drive is the "red carpet" for the rest of the programming day, with many radio stations investing significant resources during this critical window.

Permanent DST would:

- Cause serious financial losses for local broadcasters who depend on morning advertising revenue to remain viable.
- Reduce audience reach for faith-based and community programming that serves as a lifeline to many Americans.
- Undermine local businesses, who rely on radio to connect with consumers through advertising during peak commuting hours.
- Decrease community engagement and erode the localism that Congress has repeatedly prioritized in communications policy.

For many small and medium-sized stations, especially those serving rural areas or minority and immigrant communities, this could be an existential threat.

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Washington, DC 20002
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IV. Historical Precedent and Public Sentiment
Congress already attempted permanent DST once. In 1974, after implementing year-round DST for a single winter, the policy was quickly reversed following:

- A documented increase in morning traffic accidents[1],
- Significant public backlash over dark winter mornings[2].

Those conditions remain unchanged—and in many northern states, population growth has increased commuter volumes and school transportation challenges.

V. Faith-Based Media and Mission Impact
NRB's member stations serve unique roles in their communities, offering news, teaching programs, ministry content, local partnerships, and faith-based resources relied upon by millions of listeners. Morning drive time is a central platform for these ministries. Permanent DST would restrict or eliminate that reach during the hours when families are preparing for their day and when faith-based programming is most impactful.

VI. Conclusion
AM radio remains a vital component of America's media ecosystem, rural communications infrastructure, and faith-based media landscape. Permanent DST would cause widespread disruption to morning AM service, diminish public safety, and impose significant financial harm on local broadcasters who serve their communities faithfully every day.

For these reasons, the National Religious Broadcasters respectfully urges the Subcommittee and full Committee to oppose the *Sunshine Protection Act of 2025* and reject any effort to implement permanent Daylight Saving Time.

Thank you for your leadership and for considering the perspective of America's faith-based media community. We stand ready to provide additional technical information or testimony as the Committee continues its work on this issue.

Respectfully submitted,



Nic Anderson
Vice President of Public Policy
National Religious Broadcasters (NRB)

[1] The US Tried Permanent Daylight Saving Time in the '70s. People Hated It - Washingtonian
[2] Senate Votes Return to Standard Time For Four Months and Sends Bill to Ford - The New York Times



November 19, 2025

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
Chair
House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2408 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Statement for the Record to the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade in advance of the hearing, "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism" on November 20, 2025.

Dear Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) and the more than 300,000 individuals working in the travel advisor profession, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record. We could not agree more that "travel and tourism are key drivers of both our local and national economies, and it's essential that Congress explore the best ways to strengthen and capitalize on these opportunities for our country."

Time is one of our most valuable assets. We would be remiss if we did not highlight for the subcommittee the lost time (and revenue) in the travel sector stemming from the recent 43-day government shutdown. In the final days of the longest federal government shutdown in history, ASTA surveyed its members nationwide to assess the operational and economic impacts on both travel advisors and the travelers they serve. Unsurprisingly, the results provide a clear and consistent picture of an industry under significant strain.

Travel advisors play a central and indispensable role in the global travel and tourism industry. ASTA's membership encompasses the full breadth of the marketplace from home-based entrepreneurs and traditional brick-and-mortar agencies to large travel management companies (TMCs) and online travel agencies. These professionals provide critical services to the traveling public, offering informed guidance, real-time problem solving, and dedicated assistance in the event of emergencies, disruptions, or unexpected changes in plans. Corporations rely on TMCs to manage their business travel programs efficiently and effectively, ensuring policy compliance and cost control while maintaining traveler safety and satisfaction.

With more than 300,000 travel advisors nationwide, nearly two-thirds of which are independent contractors, the profession represents a significant segment of the U.S. small business

123 N Pitt St, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314

ASTA.org

community. Ninety-five percent of travel agencies are small businesses under the SBA standard, and 80 percent are women-owned. In 2024, travel agencies sold 781,000 air tickets per day, totaling $99.2 billion in annual airline sales, and were responsible for booking more than 66 percent of all cruises and tour packages. The profession booked $119.3 billion in travel last year alone, with continued industry growth projected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Given this scale and economic importance, understanding the challenges faced by travel advisors during the government shutdown is essential to fully evaluating its effect on their businesses, U.S. travelers, and the broader travel economy.

Travel advisors overwhelmingly reported increased workloads, heightened client anxiety, disrupted travel operations, and material impacts on their business performance. Two major themes emerged: 1) air travel disruptions had a ripple effect on the entire travel ecosystem; and 2) the sharp decline in new bookings due to traveler hesitation and uncertainty cost agencies significant revenue. While the severity of the impact of the government shutdown varied, overall sentiment across the profession was decidedly negative.

The following summary of the impacts from the 43-day government shutdown on travelers and travel agencies presents a myriad of challenges and concerns to the travel industry. ASTA would welcome sharing the complete results of the research with the Subcommittee if it is of interest.

Financial Impact on Travel Agencies and Advisors

The most common theme expressed by advisors in the survey responses was a loss of income while their clients dealt with flight cancellations, national park restrictions and postponement of future travel. A large portion of survey respondents commented that travelers were postponing trips until the shutdown ended, or even until next year.

Travel advisors overwhelmingly reported that the shutdown created significant financial strain for their agencies, largely due to widespread flight disruptions that required hours of unpaid rebooking work and lost commissions when trips were canceled. Many advisors noted a sharp decline in new bookings, with clients delaying or abandoning travel plans entirely because of uncertainty, fear of being stranded, or financial stress from missed paychecks. For federal government employees and contractors hit directly by loss of pay, even long-planned vacations were canceled in order to free up funds for basic living expenses.

Many travelers expected advisors to have answers that didn't exist given the day-to-day uncertainty around air traffic control staffing, TSA operations, and flight cancellations. This anxiety translated into a sharp decline in inquiries and bookings for many agencies, with sales for some agencies dropping to levels not seen since the pandemic. Advisors spent more time calming clients than creating new business, and many noted that they were doing dramatically more service work while earning less revenue.

In fact, nearly two-thirds reported clients delaying travel decisions. The hesitation spanned both leisure and business travelers and resulted in revenue drops averaging 25% for agencies. Overall,

the shutdown shook consumer confidence, with many advisors reporting their phones had "gone silent" as clients adopted a wait-and-see approach. These dynamics suppressed travel demand and threatened long-term financial risk for small agencies.

Travel Agency Operational Disruption

More than seventy percent of advisors reported moderate or severe impacts on their business operations during the shutdown. Additionally, nearly eighty percent indicated they spent additional hours each week resolving shutdown-related issues, time that was largely uncompensated. While navigating crises for clients is part of the job, many advisors reported serving as a therapist to their clients, who were rightfully distressed about the possibility of missing an important client meeting, long-planned vacation, occupational conference, or a cruise departing from a distant port.

One comment from a travel agency owner summed up the sentiment voiced throughout the survey: "As a travel agency, we've definitely felt the ripple effects of the government shutdown. Air travel has become more unpredictable, with increased delays and limited staffing impacting both flight schedules and traveler confidence. Our team has spent much more time assisting clients with rebookings, schedule changes, and [offering] reassurance due to the uncertainty. Customer service has also been affected because many travelers are understandably anxious, and we're working harder to provide the support and communication they need. Overall, we've seen a slowdown in new bookings as clients hesitate to plan future travel until things feel more stable. It's been a challenging time, but we're staying proactive and doing everything we can to guide our clients through it."

Stress on the Air Travel System

Unsurprisingly, uncertainty around air travel represented the most significant disruption. Delays, cancellations, or rebookings for clients affected 83 percent of those responding. Travel advisors absorbed the brunt of traveler frustration as airlines and air traffic control faced capacity and staffing challenges. Government-mandated restrictions of flights across the system had immediate disruptive impacts resulting in fewer options to offer clients. These impacts continue to be sorted out in the days following the shutdown.

While advisors also reported disruptions to sales volume, customer service workloads, group tours and national park availability, air travel disruptions far exceeded the other concerns. The concentration on air travel issues reflects the role of the travel advisor on the front lines of the traveler experience. Advisors are absorbing the burden of airline disruption and uncertainty, which erodes efficiency and client satisfaction.

123 N Pitt St, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314

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Limited Federal Communication

Advisors also reported little to no communication from federal agencies during the shutdown, reducing their ability to provide accurate and timely guidance to travelers. In the absence of complete and comprehensive communication, advisors often relied upon anecdotal information and their own experiences to guide travelers.

With limited guidance from federal agencies and constantly changing conditions, many advisors felt they were operating without reliable information, trying to reassure clients in an environment where facts shift daily. The industry spent far more time managing crises than selling travel, leading to concerns about long-term revenue health.

Broader Industry Consequences

More than sixty percent of respondents believed the shutdown produced ripple effects across the travel ecosystem, including concerns about consumer confidence, airline reliability, and the economic health of key travel-dependent destinations.

At the center of the disruption is the instability of the air travel system. When flights are delayed or canceled, travelers miss cruises, tours, hotel stays, meetings, and events, creating a chain reaction of rebookings, refunds, and lost revenue for suppliers across the industry. Advisors described airports as chaotic and unpredictable, with limited information, long hold times, and inconsistent communication from both airlines and government agencies. This instability has eroded traveler confidence, which emerges as one of the most damaging industry-wide consequences.

As one respondent summed it up: "This shutdown is strangling our industry. Airports are chaos. Flights delayed. Passports and visas stalled. Conferences canceled. Small businesses are watching their income vanish overnight. The ripple effect is devastating – hotels, airlines, restaurants, drivers, guides, and local shops across the country are paying the price for Washington's paralysis."

Policy Considerations

Travel advisors serve every congressional district and provide critical real-time support for millions of travelers. Based on the survey results, ASTA respectfully urges Congress to consider the following:

1. Prioritize stabilization of federal travel infrastructure, particularly aviation systems heavily affected during government shutdowns.
2. Improve communication from federal agencies to travel professionals who disseminate critical information to travelers.
3. Recognize travel advisors as essential partners in maintaining consumer confidence and navigating system-wide disruptions.

4. Include travel advisors in stakeholder discussions related to aviation reliability, shutdown impacts, and traveler-protection initiatives.

Conclusion

While many advisors believe their own role becomes more valuable in moments like these, the consensus is clear: government shutdowns disrupt not just travel plans, but the fundamental functioning of and confidence in the entire travel industry. The government placed substantial operational, economic, and emotional burdens on travel advisors, the travelers they support and the greater travel economy. Advisors are working longer hours under immense pressure, managing elevated traveler concerns, and absorbing the effects of widespread travel disruptions. Despite these challenges, they continue to provide stability and expertise during a period of significant uncertainty.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's time and consideration of our concerns, and stand ready to assist in your ongoing work. To that end, please don't hesitate to contact ASTA Vice President, Advocacy, Jessica Klement at jklement@asta.org.

Sincerely,

Zane Kerby
President and CEO
American Society of Travel Advisors

123 N Pitt St, Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314

ASTA.org

Written Statement for the Record of Laura Chadwick
President & CEO, Travel Technology Association for the
"Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism" Hearing
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

November 20, 2025

Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written statement for record for the "Daylight & Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism" hearing. My name is Laura Chadwick, and I lead the Travel Technology Association, known as Travel Tech, which recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

Travel Tech is the voice of the travel technology industry, advocating for public policies that promote transparency, competition, consumer choice, and innovation across the travel marketplace. Our members include Online Travel Agencies, Metasearch Engines, Short-Term Rental Platforms, Global Distribution Systems, Travel Management Companies, and a growing number of early-stage travel technology start-ups.

Travel Tech's founding members created the infrastructure and Internet-based marketplace from which travelers and travel service suppliers continue to benefit from today. Our members provide suppliers with access to the vast and diverse travel marketplace while offering consumers transparency, a wide range of competitive options, and customized experiences when purchasing and managing their travel. The services Travel Tech members provide generates substantial economic activity across the United States and are instrumental strengthening local tourism economies.

Our recent consumer research, "*Click, Compare, Book,*" highlights this impact. Seventy-eight percent of travelers say comparison shopping tools save them both time and money, and 80 percent agree that these platforms increase competition among travel providers and help lower prices. The survey also found that 82 percent of consumers use travel technology platforms to research and compare options—even when they ultimately book directly with an airline, hotel, or car rental company.

To support travelers, the broader industry, and our member companies, Travel Tech is engaged on several policy issues relevant to the Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee.

First, we are grateful for the Subcommittee's support of H.R. 1479, the Hotel Fees Transparency Act, particularly the leadership of Reps. Young Kim (CA-40), Kathy Castor (FL-14), Russell Fry (SC-07), and Kevin Mullin (CA-15). H.R. 1479 sets one national

standard for what constitutes a "total service price" regarding mandatory hotel fees and how they must be displayed, giving consumers clarity regardless of where or how they book lodging accommodations. H.R. 1479 was passed by the full U.S. House of Representatives in April of this year. The Senate Commerce Committee passed its companion legislation, S.314, in February, where it awaits consideration by the full Senate.

Second, with the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the 2028 Olympics, and other major events approaching, Travel Tech and its member companies support efforts to help cities benefit from and manage the influx of travelers and fans. Travel Tech has endorsed the bipartisan S.1218, the Transportation Assistance for Olympic and World Cup Cities Act of 2025 because it will provide critical resources to communities facing temporary but extraordinary strain on residents, airports, and public transit. We encourage House members to support this legislation as well. At the local level, Travel Tech is supporting temporary event waivers to allow short-term rentals to operate with added flexibility during major events. Such waivers will ensure communities can meet increased lodging demand and capture the full economic opportunities associated with large event travel.

At Travel Tech's Policy & Innovation Showcase event in May, during our "From Stadium to Stay: Building a Better Travel Experience to Support Mega Sports Events" panel, industry leaders discussed how travel reviews offered by its member companies provide important consumer protections to travelers, including those attending the World Cup. The ability to do so is grounded in Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996. Travel Tech members helped pioneer the use of user-generated content in the early 2000s, revolutionizing how travelers plan trips and explore the world. The ability to offer trusted, community-driven insights without legal exposure has allowed the industry to grow, innovate, and deliver better experiences to consumers.

Third, Travel Tech and its members strongly support Brand USA and its critical role in promoting the United States as a destination, drawing international visitors whose spending supports jobs and local businesses nationwide. Travel Tech is calling for the restoration of full federal funding for Brand USA. Its federal match was reduced from up to $100 million annually to just $20 million as part of broader federal spending cuts.

Beyond the jurisdiction of the Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee to support travel and travel innovation, Travel Tech advocated for and applauded the inclusion of key pro-innovation provisions of H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The new law makes full expensing for domestic research and development (R&D) permanent, restores 100% bonus depreciation, preserves the 20% Qualified Business Income (QBI) deduction for pass-through businesses, and modernizes Qualified Small Business Stock (QSBS) rules. Travel Tech championed these pro-innovation policies because they provide essential support and unlock capital for startups, while also giving

larger travel technology companies the certainty to invest in new products, grow their workforce, and accelerate innovation across the industry.

Travel Tech is also deeply engaged on Digital Services Taxes (DSTs), which are unilateral gross-receipts taxes imposed by some foreign governments on digital platforms' revenues, typically ranging from two to seven percent. These taxes apply once a company crosses a certain threshold from users in that country. DSTs levy taxes on gross revenues rather than net income, which is especially punitive for high-volume, low-margin businesses like online travel platforms. Travel Tech members typically operate on slim profit margins while facilitating transactions between travelers and hotels, airlines, and other suppliers, and they do not retain most of the revenue that passes through their platforms. The Trump Administration has made ending DSTs a priority and successfully compelled Canada to abandon their tax, yet France has recently increased their DST and other countries are considering introducing their own.

Travel Tech is advocating for the initiation of new Section 301 investigations by the United States Trade Representative and remedies to combat DSTs. We are also calling for equal treatment between travel comparison platforms and travel service suppliers, since direct digital channels of airlines and hotel chains offering equivalent services are exempt from DSTs. This disparity distorts competition in the travel industry, raises consumer costs, and undermines the benefits that transparent, comparison-driven marketplaces provide.

Travel Tech remains committed to promoting transparency, competition, and consumer choice across the travel marketplace. As the country prepares for the 2026 World Cup and continues to strengthen its position in the global travel economy, technology platforms will play a central role in supporting consumers, local businesses, and the broader tourism sector. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee as it examines policies that shape the future of travel, tourism, and innovation.

Agudath Israel of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

Rabbi A.D. Motzen
National Director of Government Affairs

Rabbi Yossie Charner
Director of Congressional Affairs

Rabbi Avi Schnall
Director of Federal Education Affairs

TO: Honorable Members of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
DATE: November 17, 2025
SUBJECT: Reject Permanent Daylight Saving Time

We submit this memorandum on behalf of Agudath Israel of America, a national Orthodox Jewish organization, in preparation for the Subcommittee hearing entitled, "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism. ***Agudath Israel urges members to reject any approach that would permanently extend Daylight Savings Time (DST) throughout the year, such as that put forward by the proposed Sunshine Protection Act (H.R.139).***

Agudath Israel has traditionally lent its strong support to legislation that will enhance energy savings and reduce dependency of foreign sources. But the data has shown that expanding DST has little chance of meaningfully achieving this goal. In the early 1970s, as a result of the Arab oil embargo, and with the goal of conserving energy, the extension of DST was implemented on a year-round basis. However, after only a few months, Congress decided to repeal the measure, partly due to a mere 1% savings in the nation's energy consumption. More importantly, the hasty retreat on all-year DST was the result of the public outcry over the general disruption of day-to-day American life on many fronts. Predictably, subsequent attempts to pass such legislation on the federal level have gone nowhere.

Children's Safety – This disappointing result and the consequent complications on American life were not the only factors that engendered opposition to the measure. It was an assessment of the overall benefits on the one side versus the potentially high costs – including ***the safety of our children*** – involved on the other. And this, today, remains our greatest concern.

As a representative of Orthodox Jewish schools, Agudath Israel shares the views of those in the larger school community that the switch to year-round DST would cause many of America's schoolchildren to head for school - by car, by foot, by bicycle, or by bus - in the pre-sunrise darkness. This is a prescription for disaster, as was demonstrated when the earlier extension was put into effect. At that time, there were numerous reported incidents of children being assaulted, injured, and killed as they traveled to school in the pitch-black streets. It is not unreasonable to assume that the dangers were greatest during those weeks when sunrise is at its latest and the period of darkness is at its longest. This concern was voiced loudly, and the danger was one of the key reasons that the law was repealed so quickly. Extending DST throughout the year will undoubtedly bring back those risks and put American children in jeopardy.

This concern has particular relevance to Orthodox Jewish Americans, who have special reason to be apprehensive for the safety of children going to school before the morning light. This is so for two reasons: First, many of our Jewish schools begin as early as 7:30 a.m. Second, because so many of our schoolchildren are not entitled to publicly-financed busing, there will be a disproportionate number of our sons and daughters walking or bicycling to school, or standing at bus or carpool stops. They will be among those at greatest risk.

Whatever benefits that may accrue due to extended DST pales in comparison to the cost in safety of our children.

Jewish Religious Practice – We would also like to bring to your attention, in addition to the above and among the various reactions you will no doubt receive, an unintended, yet compelling, consequence of such legislation - ***the effect the change will have on fundamental religious practices of the observant Jewish community and, as a result, American Jewish life.***

In Jewish law, morning prayers, and the rituals associated with them, are regulated in numerous ways. One aspect of this regulation is that certain prayers (i.e., the Shema and the Amida) must be recited no earlier than at specified times. The same is true with the rituals that must be performed (i.e., the donning of the *talis* - prayer shawl - and *tefillin* - phylacteries) in conjunction with prayer. The schedule for synagogue services is typically set to accommodate these set-time requirements.

The generally accepted and observed time for the recitation of the Amida - the central component of the morning prayers - is no earlier than after sunrise. The time for reading the Shema, and for the donning of the *tallis* and *tefillin*, is no earlier than one hour prior to sunrise, and ideally even closer to sunrise. Thus, the earliest time services may begin is shortly before sunrise for recitation of the Shema and preliminary prayers, and for performance of the associated rituals. The services must begin or extend past sunrise for recitation of the Amida and concluding prayers. The consequence of these requirements is self-evident: the later sunrise occurs; the later synagogue services must begin. And an hour change in the clock will produce an hour delay in the services.

In practical terms, in circumstances of late sunrises - when people are rushing to work, school, etc. – the earliest services could begin is after dawn and last in total approximately 40-60 minutes, which would include special occasions when additional prayers are added to the service.

We have investigated this matter in regard to 35 cities around the country (see appended chart) and have seen the following results:

- Late sunrises will be found in South Bend (9:13 A.M.); Indianapolis (9:07 a.m.); Louisville (9:01 a.m.); Cincinnati (8:58 a.m.); Detroit (9:02 a.m.); Atlanta (8:44 a.m.); Cleveland (8:54 a.m.); Omaha (8:50 a.m.); Seattle (8:58a.m.); Minneapolis (8:52 a.m.); See chart for other locations.

- Of these cites, a considerable number of days will find sunrise occurring after 8:00 a.m.: South Bend (148); Indianapolis (146); Louisville (142); Cincinnati (135); Detroit (131); Atlanta (124); Cleveland (121); Omaha (117); Seattle (112); Minneapolis (110). See chart for other locations.

- Of these cities, a considerable number of days will find sunrise occurring after 9:00 a.m.: South Bend (55); Indianapolis (41); Louisville (17); Detroit (23).

- Of the largest cities in U.S., late sunrises will be found in the following: New York City (8:20 a.m., 55 days after 8:00); Los Angeles (8:00 a.m., 10 days after 8:00); Chicago (8:19 a.m., 67 days after 8.00); Houston (8:19 a.m., 80 days after 8:00); Phoenix (8:34 a.m., 106 days after 8:00); Philadelphia (8:23 a.m., 76 days after 8:00); Dallas (8:31 a.m., 102 days after 8:00)

- Other cities of interest include: Pittsburgh (8:44 a.m., 109 days after 8:00); Washington, D.C. (8:28 a.m., 86 days after 8:00); San Francisco (8:26 a.m., 85 days after 8:00); Baltimore (8:27 a.m., 84 days after 8:00); Milwaukee (8:24, 74 days after 8:00); Denver (8:22, 74 days after 8:00); St. Louis (8:20, 72 days after 8:00); Lakewood, NJ (8:19 a.m., 67 days after 8:00); Miami (8:10 a.m., 61 days after 8:00); Boston (8:14 a.m., 57 days after 8:00)

It is clear from these examples that the extension of DST will create an extreme hardship on observant Jews. Given the length of morning prayer services, together with the length of the average commute to the workplace, it would be extraordinarily difficult - if not impossible - to arrive on the job by 9:00 a.m. For those whose jobs require them to report earlier than 9:00 a.m. - as many do - the change in DST would be even thornier. (We would also point out that Jewish elementary and secondary schools, as well as Jewish higher educational institutions, that incorporate prayers into the school day would find that beginning times and class schedule would be seriously disrupted.)

With a change in DST, and the later sunrise, the times for prayers and their accompanying rituals will be thrown into disarray –which, in turn, will put into jeopardy their proper fulfillment, discourage synagogue attendance, and result in late arrival for work. Jewish religious and professional life will be deeply upended.

We bring these concerns to your attention in the hope that you will consider the implications of adopting year-long DST in legislation such as the Sunshine Protection Act. There are serious consequences here for the safety of America's schoolchildren and for Jewish religious practice. And because of the seriously detrimental effect this will have on our community we urge you not to "lock the clock" in this manner.

We thank you for your consideration.

Implications of permanent DST on sunrise times in select cities

City	State	# of days sunrise is after 8 am	# of days sunrise is after 9 am	Latest sunrise if DST is made permanent
South Bend	Indiana	148	55	9:13
Indianapolis	Indiana	146	41	9:07
Louisville	Kentucky	142	17	9:01
Cincinnati	Ohio	135		8:58
Detroit	Michigan	131	23	9:02
Atlanta	Georgia	124		8:44
Cleveland	Ohio	121		8:54
Omaha	Nebraska	117		8:50
Seattle	Washington	112		8:58
Minneapolis	Minnesota	110		8:52
Portland	Oregon	109		8:52
Buffalo	New York	109		8:47
Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania	109		8:44
Phoenix	Arizona	106		8:34
Kansas City	Missouri	103		8:38
Dallas	Texas	102		8:31
Charlotte	North Carolina	101		8:33
Washington	DC	86		8:28
San Francisco	California	85		8:26
Baltimore	Maryland	84		8:27
Houston	Texas	80		8:19
Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	76		8:23
Milwaukee	Wisconsin	74		8:24
Denver	Colorado	74		8:22
St Louis	Missouri	72		8:20
Chicago	Illinois	67		8:19
Lakewood	New Jersey	67		8:19
Miami	Florida	61		8:10
Boston	Massachusetts	57		8:14
NYC	New York	55		8:20
Bangor	Maine	53		8:13
Memphis	Tennessee	53		8:10
Los Angeles	California	10		8:00
Las Vegas	Nevada			7:53
San Diego	California			7:52

Compiled by Agudath Israel of America using https://savestandardtime.com/chart

INTEGRITY IN TOURISM USTOA
United States Tour Operators Association

November 20, 2025

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Manufacturing, and Trade
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Manufacturing, and Trade
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter for the Record: "Daylight and Destinations: Examining Time, Travel, and Tourism"

Dear Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective as Congress considers ways to bolster the travel and tourism industry. USTOA is a professional, voluntary trade association created with the primary purpose of promoting integrity within the tour operator industry. Representing a $24 billion industry, USTOA members provide tours, packages, and custom arrangements that serve 8.5 million travelers annually and employ over 400,000 U.S. citizens.

USTOA is grateful to Members of this Subcommittee for their leadership in advancing policies that aim to increase travel and tourism both domestically and inbound internationally. While we are pleased to see continued strength among American consumers spending on domestic leisure travel, we are seeing worrying signs of softening demand among international inbound travel. We are aware of data that shows travel to the United States is projected to fall to just 85% of 2019 levels in 2025 and that significantly fewer visits from Canada appear to be the primary driver of this decrease.

The travel and tourism industry is the lifeblood that powers local economies and in turn powers the national economy. To reverse downward trends in travel and tourism, USTOA respectfully requests that Congress consider the following:

Restore Brand USA's Full Federal Match

USTOA respectfully requests that Congress restore Brand USA's federal match back to $100 million annually. Brand USA is charged with promoting the United States abroad as a desired destination, driving many travelers to the United States and creating significant economic impact in the local communities that depend on travel and tourism. Brand USA is always needed to promote inbound travel to the United States but given the downturn in international visitors to the nation, it is needed now more than ever.

Brand USA does not use a penny of taxpayer money. In fact, the primary funding sources for Brand USA are private donations and a federal match using funds raised from the fees that are collected from international travelers from the Visa Waiver Program. Historically, this has resulted in a return of $24 to the American economy for every $1 invested to Brand USA. This return on investment is unparalleled and demonstrative of the impact this partnership has on showcasing the wonders that the United States has to offer the world.

Restoring the full federal match would allow more international travelers to see what America's national treasures have to offer and encourage them to plan a trip.

Reduce Travel Barriers for Upcoming Significant Events in America

In 2026 and 2028, the United States will be hosting two global events that will significantly depend on travel and tourism, the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. America will also be celebrating its 250th birthday. In the lead up to these events, many travelers, both domestic and international, will come to the United States to see soccer matches, watch various Olympic sports, and discover America's national treasures.

It is critical that travelers have unimpeded access to the United States during these times. USTOA supports policies to improve travel such as the Visa Improvement, Streamlined Investment, and Tourism Optimization Reform (VISITOR) Act, which would allow greater flexibility for the Consular Affairs Bureau at the U.S. State Department to use the money collected from passport and visa fees to address the backlog in processing tourist visas at various consular posts overseas. The legislation is due to be reintroduced in the 119th Congress.

USTOA also supports strengthening the Visa Waiver Program, which allows citizens of specific countries to travel to the U.S. for tourism or business purposes for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa.

Finally, USTOA supports removing barriers to travel including burdensome visa fees that serve to dissuade those from traveling to the United States. We should be encouraging travelers to come visit the United States, not the opposite.

Provide Additional Funding to Upgrade Air Traffic Control Infrastructure and Ensure Proper Staffing

USTOA applauded the $12.5 billion investment that Congress has provided toward the creation of a brand new air traffic control system. While this investment will go toward long-needed system upgrades and help recruit and retain the best and brightest air traffic controllers, USTOA believes that more funding will be needed to ensure that the new air traffic control system is the world's envy and creates a seamless experience for the flying public.

USTOA urges Congress that funding be provided to upgrade the communications and navigation systems to reduce future travel delays due to aging infrastructure and ensure the highest number of air traffic controllers can be trained to create staffing redundancies.

Conclusion

If Congress were to adopt these policy proposals, the entire travel and tourism industry would benefit, along with the local American communities that are supported by travel and tourism dollars.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide USTOA's perspective for this important hearing.

Sincerely,



Terry Dale
President and CEO

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