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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, TOURISM AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the potential impacts of extending daylight saving time in the Pacific time zone during Presidential election years in order to achieve uniformity in the closing time of the nation's polling places. I am accompanied by Robert I. Ross, a senior attorney in our General Counsel's Office. Our office has the responsibility for interpreting the various time laws.

As we understand it, the purpose of the bill is to avoid potential adverse impacts on voter turnout in Western states from media reports of early election results elsewhere in the nation. While we take no position on the bill overall, we wish to advise you of possible adverse consequences if Congress makes this exception to the Uniform Time Act. Congress, in enacting the Uniform Time Act, had important policy reasons for establishing consistent, nationwide starting and ending times for daylight saving time (DST). Prior to enactment of the Act, there was more than one starting, and more than one ending, time each year for DST. Some states began DST in April and some in May. Some ended it in September and some in October.

This lack of uniformity caused considerable confusion and expense for interstate and foreign commerce. Businesses, using published schedules for their interstate operations, were forced to publish multiple schedules to account for these differences. If the bill were enacted, schedule publications, such as the Official Airline Guide, would have to deal with one time change affecting most of the country at the end of October, and another affecting the Pacific states one or two weeks later. Since the change would be in effect only every four years, many people are likely to be confused and inconvenienced in their travel plans, and business dealings. Any legislation compromising the uniformity of DST starting or ending times would, therefore, reintroduce some of the problems that the Uniform Time Act was designed to solve, albeit on a smaller scale.

The bill would extend the daylight saving time transition date for the Pacific time zone to the end of the first or second week of November. This could create potential problems for populations of the five states in this zone involving late sunrise times and concern for the safety of children traveling to school on dark mornings. By the end of the first week in November, DST sunrise times for the affected states would average approximately

7:45 a.m., with the latest sunrises occurring at roughly 8:00 a.m. in the northwest corner of the time zone. By the end of the second week in November, DST sunrises would average approximately 8:00 a.m. across the zone with the latest sunrises occurring around 8:15 a.m. These times would be 10 to 20 minutes later than those experienced in late October under the current seven-month daylight saving time period.

Results from studies conducted by the Department and the National Bureau of Standards during the 1974-75 national demonstration of year-round and eight month periods of DST indicated that pedestrian and cyclist fatalities increased for school age children during mornings in January and February when daylight saving time was observed. Daylight saving time sunrises in the Pacific time zone during the first and second week of November would be roughly equivalent to DST sunrise times in the third and fourth week of February. Therefore, there is the potential for an increase in deaths of school children if daylight saving time extends into the first two weeks of November.

In addition, because it would lead to a disparity between "clock time" and the actual period of daylight, the bill's DST proposal could affect such industries as agriculture and construction. By postponing the time of sunrise in the Pacific zone, the bill would be contrary to most people's wish to have their normal hours of work coincide with daylight.

The bill also has the potential for impacting interstate and foreign commerce, particularly with Canada. The Canadian jurisdictions have recently adjusted their dates of daylight saving time observance to conform to the United States' observance, but they would have little reason to change it every four years on account of a U.S. election.

As the agency responsible for implementing the Uniform Time Act, we must point out that the changes the bill proposes are not free from problems and costs. In our view, Congress is better situated than the Department of Transportation to consider the implications of this legislation for voter turnout in Western states. We believe, however, that Congress should make its decision in full awareness of these problems and costs.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my prepared statement. Mr. Ross and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.