



Thank you, Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell and members of the Committee for allowing me to enter testimony on behalf of the members of the National Golf Course Owners Association. I sincerely appreciate the time you are setting aside for a discussion about a complex and consequential matter.

My name is Jay Karen, Chief Executive Officer of the National Golf Course Owners Association. NGCOA, headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina, represents over 4,000 small businesses throughout America and serves as a vital resource for owners, operators, and general managers of various types of golf facilities, including privately-owned public courses, private clubs, municipal courses and resorts. The NGCOA provides business-critical information, education, networking opportunities, and advocacy to help our members and the greater industry operate their golf facilities efficiently and sustainably.

### **Golf as Part of the US Culture, Land and Economy**

While golf is often seen as a game enjoyed by a small, yet passionate group of people, golf has long been entrenched in the fabric of American society as one of the nation's leading participation sports. In addition to our rich history, both at the professional and recreational levels, golf is a dynamic, growing and evolving industry that's impacting the broader United States economy in a wide variety of ways.

A few tidbits about the golf industry:

- 28.1 million Americans played golf in 2024 on over 15,000 golf courses in the United States, laid out across 2 million acres of cared-for land (about the size of Delaware and Rhode Island combined), of which nearly 80% of golf courses are public access. Golf's goodness was showcased during the most difficult COVID years, as millions of people flocked to the nation's courses for the very first time for much-needed outdoor recreation.
- Golf is an activity and business with a large economic footprint that spurs millions to travel, make purchases, and build and buy houses connected to golf. The business of golf drove \$101.7 billion in economic activity throughout the U.S. in 2022, an increase of 20% over 2016. Golf tourism overall is the second-biggest economic driver in the industry, with golfers generating over \$31 billion in travel-related golf expenditures within the U.S. Today, golf has an extended economic impact of over \$226 billion, providing 1.65 million Americans with quality employment opportunities.
- Golf leads all other sporting industries in charitable giving, raising close to \$5 billion through nearly 150,000 charitable golf events at more than 80% of all golf courses. Golf also tends to be an effective fundraiser for political campaigns!
- Golf provides valuable green space, as trees and turfgrass at courses improve air quality by producing oxygen and trapping pollutants, thus preventing them from reaching

groundwater supplies. U.S. golf courses, which also serve as sanctuaries for a wide variety of plants and animals, continue to exhibit dramatic input reductions, savings, and technological advancements when it comes to environmental sustainability. Perhaps most notable is the industry's management of its most precious resource – water – with usage at golf courses dropping 29% since 2005.

- Golf delivers value in ways beyond jobs, revenue, taxes, and multiplier effects. Golf is a lifestyle, a community asset, and a positive contributor to physical, mental and social wellness. Playing golf offers significant health benefits by promoting physical activity, mental wellness, and social connection. 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 also supports mental health, particularly for adults aged 35–49, who report using golf as a way to reduce stress and recharge. In 2022, 97% of U.S. golf facilities hosted programs to expand recreational access, underscoring golf's role as a community wellness asset. Golf combines exercise, nature, and friendship into a sustainable lifelong activity.

### **Day in the Life of a Golf Course Operator - Sun-Up to Sun-Down**

A golf course operator's day starts before dawn, coordinating with maintenance crews and reviewing the tee sheet and weather. As players arrive, they oversee operations, monitor pace of play, and handle early food and beverage service. Midday brings office tasks, course checks, and managing staff or guests. Afternoons shift toward twilight play, lunch traffic, and planning upcoming events or communications. Evenings focus on closing duties, cart returns, and prepping for the next day. It's a fast-paced blend of hospitality, logistics, and fieldwork, balancing customer experience, team management, and revenue across changing daylight, weather, and play patterns. No two days are ever the same.

Sunrise and sunset directly shape a golf course operator's daily play window, staffing needs, and revenue potential. Tee times are scheduled based on available daylight, with early starts shortly after sunrise and final rounds finishing at sunset. Some courses, like Pebble Beach Golf Links, even have lights in the trees on the finishing green to accommodate golfers trying to squeeze in every last bit of play. Seasonal shifts in daylight affect how many rounds can be played, staffing schedules, and the timing of events or maintenance. Operators use this information to plan twilight pricing, ensure safety, and optimize food, beverage, and cart operations. In short, daylight hours are the framework for nearly every operational and financial decision on the course, impacting both the guest experience and the bottom line.

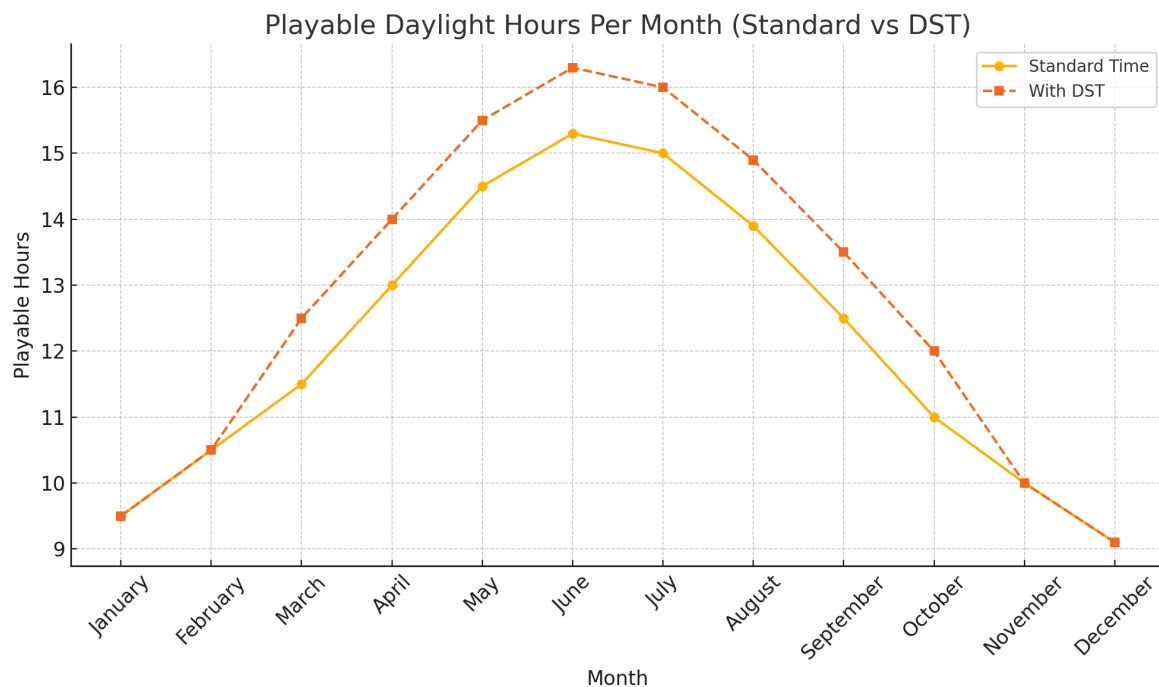
Seasonal changes in sunrise, sunset, and weather, especially frost, significantly impact how golf operators plan each day. In winter, even if sunrise is technically around 7:30 AM, play may be delayed until 9:00 or later due to frost, which can damage turf if disturbed. This reduces the number of playable hours and limits tee time availability. As a result, operators often start later, compress the tee sheet, and reduce staffing. In contrast, summer offers long days with early sunrises and late sunsets, allowing more tee times, twilight play, and higher revenue potential. Maintenance also adjusts seasonally—crews may need to shift schedules to prepare the course before first light in summer, while winter prep happens in a tighter window. Event planning, F&B

hours, and dynamic pricing models must all be adapted to the season's light and weather. In short, seasonal daylight and frost risk are critical variables in maximizing playability, revenue, and turf health.

### Recreational Daylight - The Industry's Lifblood

We know that "locking the clock" doesn't increase or decrease the number of daylight hours for any service provider in any geographies around the US; it simply changes where that daylight occurs on our clocks. Why does this matter to golf? Golf relies on what we call "Recreational Daylight," which are the hours of the day that line up with the sun's light and people's general availability to be outside to enjoy recreational activity. Historically people are inclined to pursue recreation and outdoor activities at a higher rate for "after-dinner" than "before-breakfast" daylight. Proposed changes to "locking the clock" would have the following effect for golf:

- Making Standard Time permanent would shift one hour per day for every course in the country (in their respective season lengths) from recreational to non-recreational daylight (i.e. trades 8PM for 8AM).
- Making Daylight Saving Time permanent would provide additional recreational daylight hours for dates in November to March. Two distinctions: Northern facilities wouldn't benefit as much, because these are non-season months due to temps/snow, etc, and these months are also peak season for the snowbird locations such as FL and AZ



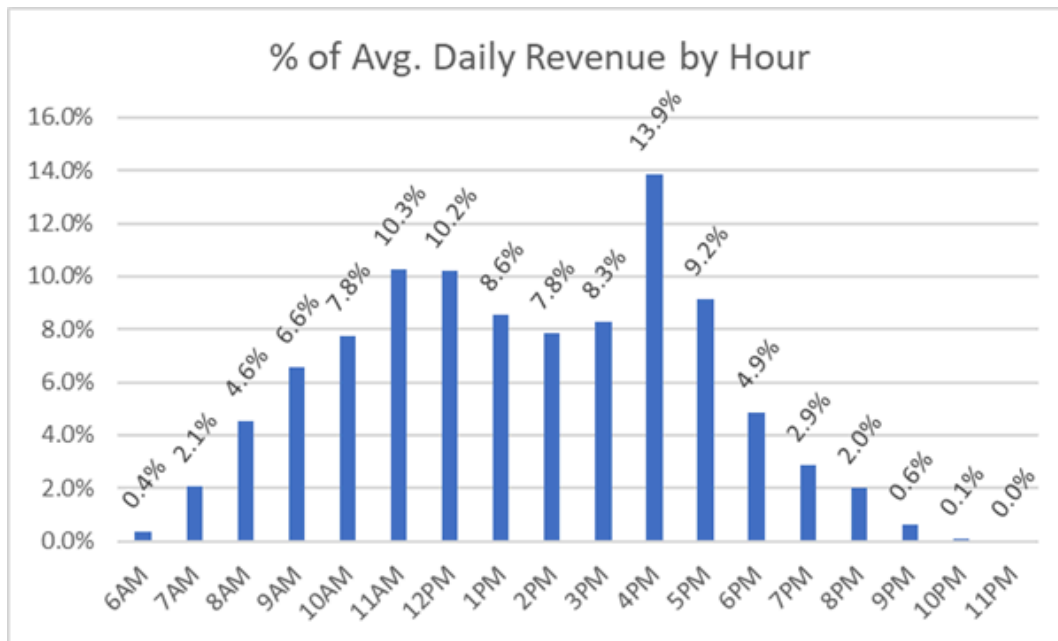
Latitude matters in golf relative to how daylight length varies during the year. Perhaps the best way to explain this is to look at the daylight length at June summer solstice in northern latitudes vs. a south US benchmark:

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

In a formula that adjusts for weather, this means that a course in Minneapolis has room for 50+ more golfers per day than Miami on the same date. The Minneapolis course will continue to have more daily capacity than a course in Miami through the autumnal equinox in September. This relationship plays out across the northern US.

- Northern courses benefit from the annual daylight distribution naturally.
- This is also a factor fueling why golf participation is significantly higher in northern vs. southern states.

Golf courses in general generate higher revenue in later-day vs. early-morning hours. Based on analyzing a range of courses and their Point of Sale (PoS) data for revenue by hour, the distribution below illustrates revenue as an average representation:



Afternoon and evening daylight revenue is approximately 40% higher than before-lunch hours for the average golf facility. Hence, trading-backwards (eliminating DST) is going to cost the average operator about 7-8% of their annual revenue.

Here is a look at the impact - either direction - on approximately 8,000 public, regulation-length golf courses in the United States. This economic picture only includes the gain or loss in green

fee revenue, and does not include the impact on spending on golf cart rental, merchandise, food and beverage, golf lessons and other areas of the business. Keep in mind this does not include thousands of private clubs, which would augment the impacts in both directions.

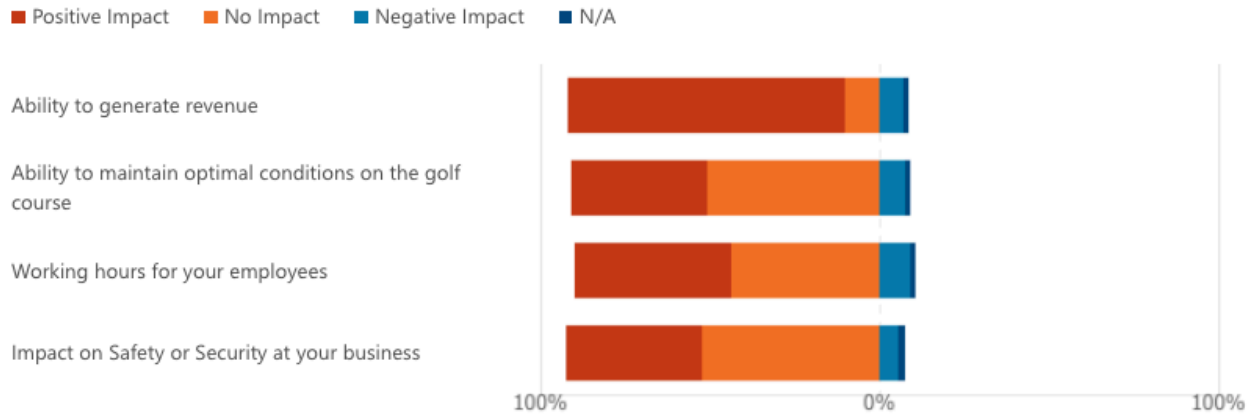
	<b>Permanent Standard Time</b>	<b>Permanent Daylight Saving Time</b>
<b>Public Regulation Courses</b>	<b>8,000</b>	
<b>Hours per week lost</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Weeks impacted</b>	<b>34</b>	
<b>Capacity Rounds per Hour</b>	<b>28</b>	
<b>Total Lost Rounds</b>	<b>-53,000,000</b>	
<b>Likely Utilization Factor</b>	<b>70%</b>	
<b>Rounds Played Lost or Gained</b>	<b>-37,000,000</b>	<b>+23,000,000</b>
<b>% of Annual US Total</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>+4.3%</b>
<b>Green Fee (only) Translation</b>	<b>-\$1.665B</b>	<b>+\$1.035B</b>

- Making Standard Time Permanent would cost all states golf revenue to the tune of \$1.6B or 7.5% of their total annual green fee income, or approximately \$162,000 per course.
- Making Daylight Saving Time permanent gives the industry about half that increment of a tailwind of \$1B or 4.6% of green fee income, or approximately \$250,000 per facility.
- Leaving the clock changing as-is obviously avoids both the significant downside while forfeiting the moderate upside.

### **Daylight Saving Time - Industry Sentiment**

83% of NGCOA course owners and operators surveyed feel a permanent change to Daylight Saving Time would benefit the overall success and viability of their businesses, though a lesser 64% support making Daylight Saving Time permanent. Our assumption is that the gap represents those who don't believe the change and related disruptions to business and lives are worth it.

## Golf Course Owners React to the Impact of Permanent DST



To illustrate additional complexities of this, golf course superintendents employed at golf courses report only 40% of their surveyed members feel a move to permanent DST would benefit the success and viability of their work, with 33% being unsure and 27% saying it would not be helpful.

Below are direct comments on Daylight Saving Time from industry practitioners:

*As an owner-operator of the largest private country club in Indiana, staying on Daylight Saving Time is the best for all outdoor activities. Whether it's pickleball, golf, outdoor dining, boating, walking, etc., people use more time in the evening than in the morning. When I moved to Indiana 12 years ago, one of my favorite intangibles was the amount of daylight in the evenings. You can play golf in Indiana until 9:30. That's amazing and it means that members are playing 18 holes well past the traditional end of the workday. Even though we are in the far western portion of the Eastern time zone, I still wish I had even more daylight in the evenings and I dread when we go back to Standard Time in November. It's the end of February, and we can be outside until 6:30. I wish we were on Daylight Savings time today and I could be outside until 7:30 on this 60-degree, February day.*

*As a golf teacher, I am able to teach the public after they are done with their workday, therefore extending my ability to generate revenue. However, due to maintenance, I am unable to teach in the mornings.*

*We are in the Central Time Zone but within 10 miles of Eastern Time. In the winters, it gets dark here at 4:00 pm. If you have a long frost delay, it can really limit the number of tee times that could finish 18 holes before dark.*

*At our daily fee municipal golf course, we feel as if going to permanent Daylight Saving would be more beneficial in the long run to our revenue stream based on the amount of play after people get off of work. The maintenance crew's working time would be the*

same (they start working 1 hour before sunrise). Standard time would take golfers away after work and we do not see many people showing up way early to get their round in.

Permanent Daylight Saving Time is a big positive for golf and other recreation activities including youth and adult baseball, soccer, football, tennis, pickleball, etc. More outdoor recreation activities occur in the evening. More evening light increases participation and revenue while also decreasing lighting expenses at outdoor fields.

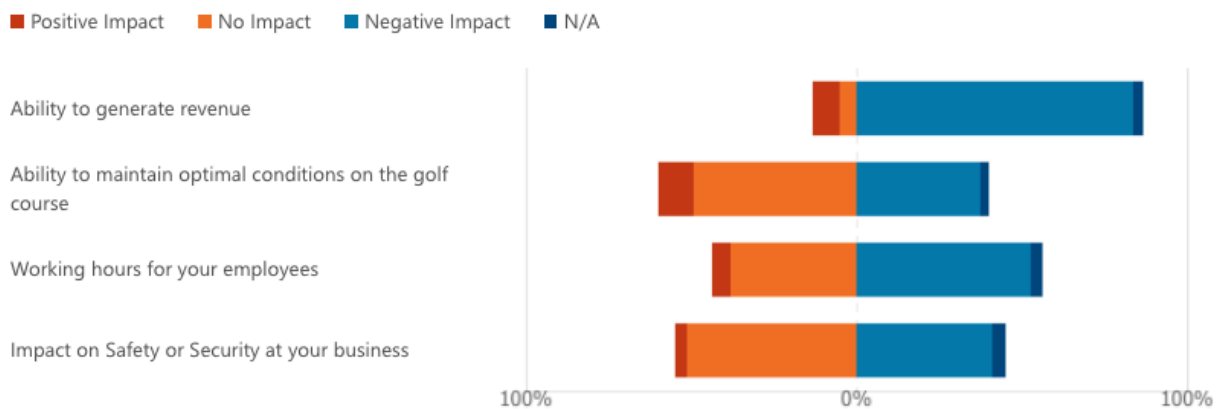
Evening golf generates more after work activity including serving dinner. We would align our morning shifts with new sunrise times. Early morning players might be put off by starting later, but they will adjust. These are generally the lowest revenue players. I am all in on Permanent Daylight Saving Time.

Having an extra hour of daylight for the evening hours provides us with more revenue opportunities than opening the tee sheet earlier. We have many more golfers who prefer to play 9-holes after work than those who would come at say 5:00-5:30 am.

### **Standard Time - Industry Sentiment**

9% of NGCOA members feel a permanent change to Standard Time would benefit the overall success and viability of their businesses, and 7% support making Standard Time permanent. While some course owners feel Standard Time would support the morning-heavy businesses they run, most respondents feel a move to permanent Standard Time would negatively impact their ability to generate revenue, to maintain optimal conditions on the course, to have reasonable working hours for their employees and their ability to provide safety and security at their businesses.

Golf Course Owners React to the Impact of Permanent ST



To illustrate additional complexities of this, golf course superintendents report only 19% of their surveyed members feel a move to permanent Standard Time would benefit the success and viability of their businesses, with 35% being unsure and 46% saying it would not be helpful.

Comments on Standard Time from industry practitioners:

*We are in a resort vacation area and our busiest times are mornings. Most visitors have evening dinner or other plans. Morning help is also easier to find than evening help.*

*I am unsure how changing to DST would affect our business, as we don't play golf in the winter. However, moving to ST would significantly negatively impact our business. We have a significant amount of late afternoon play. No-one will want to play at 4 am, but a number of people play at 6 pm and wouldn't finish before dark if ST was implemented.*

*We are providing golf during DST under the current system. So in MN it would offer no change to the golf season. However, Standard Time would be terrible for MN golfers. It already is light so early in the summer here (with DST) that taking away that extra hour of evening golf would be no good. We don't need it to be light at 4 AM under the Standard time system.*

*Although ST would allow some courses to have grounds maintenance start earlier, many courses may not be able to take advantage of the earlier start due to local noise ordinances.*

*When working a 12-month calendar, having earlier leave times at the end of the day is needed. Going home later will make hiring more difficult if it is for extended time. The winter months are a needed break and allow employees to spend more time with their families.*

*Permanent Standard time would cause income loss that would be devastating to our public course!*

*A change to Permanent Standard Time would devastate the revenue we are able to generate. I am currently able to sell early morning tee times, then host a late-morning golf outing and an evening after-work golf league. Losing an hour of evening light would only be able to sell it twice.*

*Standard Time would be a disaster for golf & outdoor recreation. If we lock into Standard Time year-round, here's what we're facing:*

- 4:30 AM sunrises that no one benefits from.*
- An impossible hiring situation for maintenance crews starting at 3:30 AM.*
- Tee sheets with massive gaps in the morning and no twilight rounds to make up for it.*
- Leagues, tournaments, and evening events canceled or severely limited.*
- A massive economic hit—not just to golf, but to all outdoor recreation and tourism.*

*If we had permanent Standard time it would affect our ability to get the maintenance out early in the morning due to the timing of the local noise ordinances. We may actually lose some of those morning times because we would have to start later in the day. The*



*one positive I would see in permanent Standard time is being able to get golf shop and cart staff home a little earlier. Here in Idaho it is light until almost 10 pm in June/July and cart staff especially can be here until 11 pm.*

*Going to a permanent DST would reduce my facility's revenue by over \$144,000 by eliminating my first hour of tee times, 7am to 8 am. Additionally, adjusting maintenance schedules to avoid working in the dark is not desirable.*

*The high fixed costs of maintaining a golf course (or any business) would remain the same whether or not we are on standard time or daylight savings time. A typical 18 hole golf course in Michigan budgets approximate 50% of their overall expenses to go to course maintenance. So with that lost revenue, and the same fixed costs for a business where does that leave a business to cut? The job impact in Michigan from the golf industry is 60,000! How will that affect the economic health of Michigan?*

### **Status Quo - Industry Sentiment**

27% of NGCOA members support keeping the current status of changing the clocks twice per year. And as we identified previously, there is a 19% gap between those who say Daylight Saving will benefit their business and a desire to actually lock the clock on DST. It can be interpreted that between a quarter and one-third of our members would prefer that we keep changing the clocks twice per year. Many golf courses in areas that slow down in the winter and receive modest play enjoy having some relief later in the day for their employees with the sun setting earlier. Thus, many enjoy the changing of the clocks with the changing of the seasons for workplace culture benefits.

Comments on Status Quo from industry practitioners:

*Since we are not open for golf in the winter months, switching to DST permanently would not have much effect on our operation. Switching to ST would not benefit us as we would not start earlier in the morning, and would lose time in the evening for golf revenue.*

*DST in the winter would result in not opening until well after 10:00 on certain days due to frost. Thus likely causing a significant loss of morning rounds (seniors) in the winter without any gain in the evening due to sunset at 6:00 (not enough time for golf after work). ST in the summer would obviously significantly impact league and evening play without an offsetting gain in the morning with sunrise being before 5:00 a.m. for much of the summer. Our best scenario is the current system of switching between DST & ST.*

*For the Florida golf industry, a change to permanent Daylight Saving time would cost us lots of revenue as it would be darker and longer in the winter mornings. This is the time of year that Florida clubs make all or most of their money. Golfers do not play in the evening in the winter, so we would see no additional revenue during the winter months. The status quo makes the best sense for the Florida golf industry.*

*This issue is far bigger than golf. It's also for the safety of children so they don't have to go to school in the dark in winter. Anyone who puts business profitability over the safety of American children is, in my opinion, on the wrong side of history. Also, to all of the people who want to eliminate the practice of changing clocks twice a year..... why? What legitimate reason do they have other than they don't like it?*

*Making DST permanent would bring in more revenue in the short term. However, costs would also increase, and employees' work/life balance would also be affected. Evening times are great for those with families and family commitments. Adding more sunlight hours during this time would affect that. I don't see many clubs adding additional staff, even if their revenue streams increase.*

### **Conclusion**

The golf industry is acutely aware of how making potential changes to the clock by eliminating either Daylight Saving Time or Standard Time is a modern-day Gordian Knot for lawmakers. There will be winners and losers no matter which way the knot is cut. Data and sentiment from the golf industry, though, reveal a clear favorability toward permanent Daylight Saving Time. Overall, permanent DST is viewed as more beneficial to the golf industry particularly for small business revenue, accessibility to the game, and general recreational enjoyment and benefits. Our industry is uniquely tied to daylight, and the number of playable hours directly affects the number of rounds we can offer, the staff we employ, and the revenue we generate, especially in the late afternoon and early evening.

The National Golf Course Owners Association does not take a formal position on whether Congress should make Daylight Saving Time permanent, because a healthy portion of our members prefer the status quo. However, while a very small percentage of our members favor Standard Time, we want to make it clear that we oppose any proposal to make Standard Time permanent and year-round for the entire nation. Permanent Standard Time would result in earlier sunsets for most of the year, particularly in spring, summer, and early fall, the peak seasons for most of our industry. This shift would eliminate critical late-day tee times and reduce twilight leagues, after-work play, food-and-beverage revenue, cart fees and more. In some regions, 25-40% of daily rounds begin after 3:00 p.m. Permanent Standard Time would put much of that business at risk. Beyond revenue, this would hurt seasonal employment, fundraising events for charities, and accessibility for working golfers who rely on evening hours. These economic impacts would be most severe in states with long seasons and large golf economies, such as Florida, California, Arizona, and the Carolinas, as well as the Northern tier, seasonal and golf-dense places like Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, New England and the Pacific Northwest.

While we sympathize with some of the sleep-related arguments for permanent Standard Time, we believe the counterweight of outside activity in the latter parts of the day provides significant health benefits that cannot be ignored. Child and adult obesity can be stemmed through sun-lit play and exercise outdoors. Hikers, joggers and bikers are at greater safety risk - or may choose not to participate - with earlier sunsets. The biological benefits of sunlight and related Vitamin D

are well documented, including improved immune functions, bone health and positive mental health. In short, a reduction in active hours would likely lead to further health issues caused by a more sedentary lifestyle. Ample research supports serious crime reduction being correlated with increased daylight. We would rather see the Senate favor the status quo over permanent Standard Time.

We ask the Senate to consider the practical and economic consequences of losing evening daylight. We encourage policymakers to explore solutions that preserve extended daylight, which supports not only golf but also greater outdoor recreation, tourism, hospitality, good health and local economies.

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We extend our gratitude to the following people and organizations for contributing information and insight to our written testimony:

- Ronnie Miles, Senior Director of Advocacy, National Golf Course Owners Association
- Thomas Smith, Chief Operating Officer, National Golf Course Owners Association
- Jim Koppenhaver, Principal, Pellucid Corporation
- Stuart Lindsay, President, Edgehill Golf Advisors
- Greg Nathan, President and CEO, National Golf Foundation
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