

March 6, 2026

Members of the Alaska State Legislature

Alaska State Capitol

Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Opposition to SB 26 (Permanent Pacific Standard Time for Alaska)

Dear Members of the Legislature:

I am writing to register my unequivocal opposition to Senate Bill 26, which passed the Senate by a vote of 18 to 2 and would move Alaska permanently to Pacific Standard Time. I urge every member of the House to reject this bill in the strongest possible terms. This is not a minor scheduling convenience. It is a proposal that would inflict measurable harm on the health, daily lives, and fundamental wellbeing of Alaskans, and it must not advance.

*A Sunrise at Noon is Not Governance. It is Absurdity.*

Let me state this plainly so there is no ambiguity. Under Pacific Standard Time, on the winter solstice, the sun would not rise in Anchorage until approximately 11:00 a.m. In Fairbanks, where I live and work, sunrise would occur at approximately noon. The sun would not appear above the horizon until lunchtime. That is not an inconvenience. That is a fundamental disruption of the relationship between human beings and the natural light cycle that governs our biology. No economic argument, no appeal to commercial convenience, and no desire to align Alaska's clocks with Seattle justifies telling 700,000 people that they will spend every winter morning in total darkness until the middle of the day.

*The Health Consequences Are Real and Documented.*

Decades of peer reviewed research in chronobiology confirm that chronic misalignment between social time and solar time produces serious health consequences. Increased rates of cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, depression, seasonal affective disorder, impaired cognitive function, and elevated suicide risk are all associated with populations forced to live on clocks that diverge significantly from their solar position. Alaska already struggles with among the highest rates of seasonal depression and suicide in the nation. Moving to Pacific Standard Time would worsen every one of those outcomes. This Legislature would be voting to push Alaskans further from natural light exposure during the months when they need it most. That is not a defensible policy choice. It is reckless.

*The 1983 Consolidation Already Damaged Solar Alignment. This Would Make It Worse.*

Alaska had four time zones prior to 1983. Those time zones existed for a reason: they reflected the enormous longitudinal span of this state and kept communities in reasonable alignment with solar noon. The consolidation into a single Alaska Time Zone was sold on the same argument

being recycled today, that uniformity would simplify commerce and communication. What it actually did was push Fairbanks and Anchorage approximately one hour beyond their natural solar position. We have been living with that distortion for over forty years. Rather than acknowledging that the 1983 consolidation went too far, this proposal doubles down on the same failed logic and pushes us an additional hour further from where we should be. Two full hours off solar time. For Fairbanks residents, that means our clocks would tell us it is 10:00 a.m. when the sun has not yet risen and our bodies know it is 8:00 a.m. This is not simplicity. It is dysfunction imposed by statute.

*The Commercial Justification Does Not Withstand Scrutiny.*

The central argument for this change appears to be that Alaska needs to be synchronized with the Pacific time zone for the benefit of bankers, broadcasters, and tourism operators. I challenge anyone advancing that argument to explain precisely what transaction or communication in 2026 requires real time clock synchronization with Seattle. We live in an era of email, asynchronous messaging, electronic funds transfers, and global commerce conducted across dozens of time zones every day. Businesses in Tokyo trade with businesses in London. Firms in Mumbai collaborate with teams in New York. The notion that Alaska's economy will collapse if we are two hours offset from the West Coast for part of the year is not a serious argument. It is a relic of a rotary phone era that no longer applies. And even if some marginal commercial convenience existed, it would not justify sacrificing the health and natural rhythms of hundreds of thousands of Alaskans so that a hotel booking company in Anchorage can answer the phone at the same hour as one in Portland.

*This Proposal Serves Narrow Interests at the Expense of the Public.*

I want to be direct about what is happening here. This is a proposal that benefits a narrow set of commercial interests, primarily tourism operators and entities doing regular business with the Lower 48, at the direct expense of every Alaskan who wakes up in the morning, sends children to school, commutes to work, or depends on natural daylight for physical and mental health. The people who will bear the cost of this change are not the ones asking for it. Workers in Fairbanks, families in the Mat Su Valley, elders in rural communities, schoolchildren waiting for buses in pitch darkness, and every person in this state who already fights through months of limited daylight will pay the price so that a relatively small number of commercial operators can avoid the minor inconvenience of doing arithmetic when scheduling a conference call.

*If Anything, Alaska Should Be Moving Toward Restoring Multiple Time Zones.*

The correct direction is the opposite of what this bill proposes. If the Legislature genuinely wants to improve the daily lives of Alaskans, it should be examining whether the 1983 consolidation itself was a mistake and whether restoring time zones that more closely reflect solar reality across this state would better serve its residents. Southeast Alaska, which historically operated on Pacific Time, has a legitimate geographic basis for that alignment. Interior and Southcentral Alaska do not. Forcing the entire state onto a single clock was an act of administrative convenience that ignored basic geography and astronomy. Compounding that error by pushing the clock even further from the sun is the wrong answer to the right question.

*The Legislature Must Reject This Bill.*

I am asking every member of this body to vote against this proposal. Do not advance it out of committee. Do not allow it to reach the floor for a vote if it can be stopped earlier. The health and daily welfare of your constituents is not a bargaining chip for commercial scheduling convenience. Alaskans did not elect you to move their sunrise to noon. We elected you to protect our interests, and this bill does the opposite.

I intend to communicate this position to every prior and current elected official I know, to community organizations, to prior legislators, and to Alaska's congressional delegation. I will advocate against this proposal at every opportunity and I encourage you to do the same.

Respectfully but firmly,

Joseph S. Russo

Fairbanks, Alaska