

## “War-Time”: Past and Future of Daylight Saving Time

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### Background

US and Canadian railroad companies established a four-zone unified time zone system in 1883 to eliminate confusion caused by scores of conflicting, locally established time zones. Later, states and municipalities also adopted this system. Following Germany, England, and France who, in 1916, introduced the first daylight-saving measures to cut energy used for artificial lighting, the United States adopted the Standard Time Act in 1918. It charged the Interstate Commerce Commission with establishing official boundaries between the four continental time zones and set up the first system for saving daylight. After the war and over a veto by President Wilson, the federal daylight-saving mandate was repealed giving states the option of continued observance. The continental time-zones and standard time it established remained in effect. During World War II, a federal Daylight Saving Time (DST) was re-established also as an energy saving measure and again after the war, the decision to observe it was left to states.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving the decision to states reintroduced some of the chaos that led to the passage of the 1918 Standard Time Act.

The lack of standardization led to a patchwork where some areas observed DST while adjacent areas did not, and it was not unheard of to have to reset a clock several times during a short trip (e.g., bus drivers operating on West Virginia Route 2 between Moundsville, West Virginia, and Steubenville, Ohio had to reset their watches seven times over 35 miles).<sup>2</sup>



The Uniform Time Act of 1966 (15 U.S.C. §§ 260-64) transferred authority to the Department of Transportation and gave Congress, or the Secretary of Transportation, the authority to change time zone boundaries and established eight time zones for the U.S. and its territories: Atlantic, Eastern, Central, Mountain, Pacific, Hawaii-Aleutian, Samoa, and Chamorro. It also established a system of DST with federally mandated uniform start and end dates. In 2005, an extra month was added to DST with the passage of the Energy Policy Act.

Proponents of that change pointed to the extra energy savings that would result. However, a study conducted by the California Energy Commission found the savings negligible. At best, they found an 0.18% drop in the use of some forms of energy such as artificial light but, increases in others.<sup>3</sup> Retail businesses have generally favored DST because people tend to spend more money after work when there is daylight.

1. [US Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics](https://www.transportation.gov/bureau/statistics)

2. <https://www.history.com/news/8-things-you-may-not-know-about-daylight-saving-time>

3. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-daylight-saving-time/2015/03/06/970092d4-c2c1-11e4-9271-610273846239\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-daylight-saving-time/2015/03/06/970092d4-c2c1-11e4-9271-610273846239_story.html)



Under the Uniform Time Act, as amended, states may pass laws to cease observance of DST. Currently, DST is not observed in Hawaii, Arizona (excluding lands of the Navajo), American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In places where DST is still observed, it follows the federally mandated dates (begins second Sunday in March, ends first Sunday in November).

## Recent Trends

In recent years, hundreds of DST bills have been introduced around the nation. Nearly 20 states have passed legislation, resolutions, or referendums to permanently adopt DST: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, and Wyoming. In 2021, over 30 states introduced legislation to stop observing DST. Most of the recently proposed legislation establishes DST as the permanent official time, but Standard Time is also proposed as an official time in numerous instances. In some states, both are being proposed simultaneously. States who have enacted legislation to permanently switch to DST and those who have signaled their desire to do so through resolution will have to wait for federal law to change before any state laws may take effect.<sup>4</sup> This year U.S. Senate Bill 623, The Sunshine Protection Act of 2021, was introduced with 14 co-sponsors to make DST permanent across the country.

## Nebraska and Neighboring States

In recent years, legislation regarding DST has been introduced in Nebraska: LB 309, Brasch; LB 1015, Briese; and LB 283, Briese (2017, 2020, 2021, respectively). LB 309 would have adopted permanent Standard Time while LB 1015 and LB 283 proposed adopting permanent DST. No neighboring state has elected to change its observance of DST, however in 2021, three neighboring states proposed permanent DST (Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri), and two proposals failed (Wyoming and South Dakota).

## Final Analysis

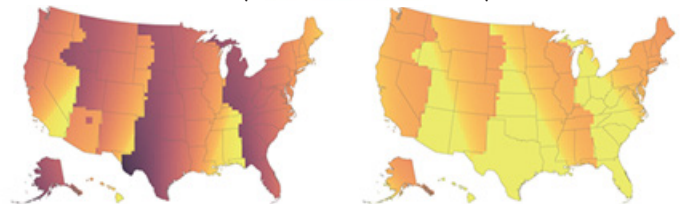
There is a common and persistent myth that DST was instituted for the benefit of farmers. In fact, that

community lobbied hard against the change in 1919.<sup>5</sup> When DST was being contemplated again in 1943, 23 Nebraska state Senators co-sponsored a resolution opposing “war-time,” as it had come to be nicknamed; 11 of them self-identified as farmers and another five represented rural districts. While occupation may color a person’s perspective on DST, almost everyone dislikes the bi-annual changing of the clock and the attendant disruption to circadian rhythms. Health and safety studies repeatedly show negative effects including increased rates of heart attack, depression and suicide, and automobile and workplace accidents with the fall change of clocks. Conversely, studies also show improved road safety and reduced crime after the spring change to DST. In the final analysis, it seems what most people care about when asked their feelings on DST is whether it will be light or dark when it is time to wake or return home from work.<sup>6</sup> To that end, the following visualization shows the number of days in a year the sunrises and sunsets come at ‘reasonable’ hours, according to one study.<sup>7</sup>

### Daylight Saving Time as currently observed

Days with reasonable SUNRISE time (7:00 AM or earlier)      Days with reasonable SUNSET time (5:00 PM or later)

0 Days      365 Days



### If Daylight Saving Time were abolished



### If Daylight Saving Time were always in effect



Image Courtesy of Andy Woodruff

4. [National Conference of State Legislatures](https://www.nationalconferenceofstatelegislatures.org/)

5. <https://www.timeanddate.com/time/dst/history.html>

6. <https://www.timeanddate.com/time/dst/daylight-saving-health.html>

7. <http://andywoodruff.com/blog/where-to-hate-daylight-saving-time-and-where-to-love-it/>