

## Orlando Sentinel

### Daylight saving year-round: Once a disaster, always a disaster

By **JAMES C. CLARK**  
GUEST COLUMNIST | OCT 31, 2018

Florida passed a law making Daylight Saving Time year-round. But the change still needs congressional approval.

Daylight saving time ends Sunday, and if Sen. Marco Rubio has his way, it will be the last time we move our clocks — ever. Permanent daylight saving time is one of those ideas that seems to have universal support, promising to bring joy to all.

But a word of advice to all politicians embracing the idea of year-round daylight saving time: The last person to call for year-around daylight saving time was Richard Nixon, and while it is not as well-known as Watergate, both ended the same way — disaster.

This version of the Nixon-Rubio plan started with a Sarasota barber who complained to State Sen. Greg Steube that he wished there were more light at the end of the day. The bill sped through the Florida House and Senate with support from Democrats and Republicans and only a few voices of opposition. Gov. Rick Scott signed the legislation. Steube calls his bill the pleasant sounding “Sunshine Protection Act,” but it is really the “Sunshine Shifting Act.”

Florida can't simply go to year-round daylight saving time; it needs the approval of Congress, and that is where Rubio comes in.

Daylight saving time started during World War I, the work of another unpopular world leader, German Kaiser Wilhelm. Other nations around the world followed Wilhelm's lead, including the United States where President Woodrow Wilson said it would help the farmers, although the farmers hated it. It was so unpopular that Congress repealed it over Wilson's veto.

Daylight saving time came back in World War II, but ended when the war did. For a time, states — and even cities — were free to do whatever they wanted. It was possible to have a city — such as Philadelphia — on a different time than the rest of the state. In one case, anyone traveling the 35 miles from Moundsville, W.Va., to Steubenville, Ohio, went through seven time zones.

Lyndon Johnson signed legislation in 1966 to end the confusion, and that is where it stood until Nixon came along. The Arab oil boycott of 1973 created long lines at gas stations and soaring gas prices. The Nixon administration was helpless, but needed to come up with something. Their solution was to make daylight saving time permanent. It would reduce electric consumption in the evening and cut oil consumption — the theory went.



Screen capture of former American President Richard Milhous Nixon (1913 - 1994) gestures emphatically during an interview on 'Frost On America' in April 1977. (Photo by John Bryson/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images) (John Bryson / Time & Life Pictures/Getty Image)

**From the first day, it was a disaster.** Here is the problem: The Earth revolves around the sun. You can't increase the amount of sunlight unless the Earth stops spinning in June, which would probably lead to other problems.

In Florida in June, there are 14 hours of daylight. By December there are 3.5 hours less and no legislation can change that. It is possible to move the clock, but the length of sunshine remains the same. **It would be possible to move the clock ahead 12 hours and make it daylight at midnight, but it would be dark at noon.**



Republican presidential candidate, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla. speaks at a town hall meeting in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky) (Patrick Semansky / AP)

When the bill was passed, there was positive reaction, and people talked about all the things they would do, including a round of golf after work. But it had better be miniature golf — the Rubio bill would extend sunset from 5:30 to 6:30.

It would also mean a giant difference for anyone watching television. It is doubtful that the television networks would adjust their schedules just for Florida, so viewers would find their favorite shows starting an hour later. Really, local news at midnight? Even New Year's Eve would be different; it would be 1 a.m. in Florida before the giant ball falls in Times Square. **Farmers, who start their day early, would have to wait until the sun comes up — an hour later. The same with construction workers who start early, but could hardly work in darkness.**

**The reaction to Nixon's plan came quickly; all it accomplished was to move darkness from afternoon to morning. Millions of schoolchildren were going to school in pitch dark, which meant more 16-, 17- and 18-year old drivers on the road in darkness. Accidents soared and schools and parents protested. Eight months after he signed the legislation making daylight saving time permanent, Nixon resigned and soon after that Congress repealed the permanent daylight saving time law.**

Now, Rubio wants it back. He introduced legislation in the Senate and is pushing for committee hearings. Not only does Rubio want to make it permanent in Florida; he has introduced a separate bill to make it nationwide.

Rubio points to a study showing that economic activity drops several percentage points during the months when there is no daylight saving time. But that could also be because in most of the country it is bitter cold, and people don't want to go out in miserable weather.

Look out your window at 7 a.m., and know that it will be the new 8 a.m. if Rubio is successful.

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