

Opinion > Editorials

Editorial: For kids' sake, vote no on year-round daylight-saving time

66

Prop. 7 would force California's 6 million school children to head to school in the dark for three months of the year



Milpitas High School Students walk to school in the rain. If Prop. 7 passes, the students would have to walk to school in the dark for three months of the school year. (Bay Area News Group File Photo)

By **MERCURY NEWS & EAST BAY TIMES EDITORIAL BOARDS** |

PUBLISHED: August 18, 2018 at 8:15 am | UPDATED: November 2, 2018 at 1:00 pm

Even those who hate the seasonal switch to standard time and daylight-saving time should vote no on this ill-conceived ballot measure to make daylight-saving time permanent, year-round.

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Assemblyman Kansen Chu, D-San Jose, is the driving force behind the proposal to repeal the state's 1949 Daylight Saving Time Act. He says the current practice of springing forward on the second Sunday of March and falling back on the first Sunday of November is outdated and not beneficial to Californians.

As a former member of the Berryessa Union School Board, he should know better.

More than 6 million children attend K-12 schools in the state. If Prop. 7 passes, those children will be walking, biking, waiting for buses or driving to school in the dark for about three months every year. On Dec. 1, for example, sunrise in the Bay Area would be at 8:05 a.m., instead of 7:05 a.m. On Feb. 1, it would be 8:13 a.m., instead of 7:13 a.m. The average school start time for California schools is 8:07 a.m. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 20 percent of the total number of pedestrians killed in traffic crashes are children up to 14 years old. It also notes that more than 70 percent of all pedestrians killed in traffic accidents occur when it is dark.

Nothing is more important to parents than the safety of their children. California has no business putting their lives at greater risk, even if year-round daylight-saving time means youth sports teams can practice later in the evenings before it gets dark.

The potential for disruption for California businesses is also problematic. Changing to year-round daylight-saving time will mean airlines have to change their flight schedules for the state. No estimate exists on the potential cost, but when Congress extended daylight-saving time by a month in 2005, the Air Transport Association said the price tag for just lining up travel schedules with international flights would be \$147 million.

It would also create disruption and confusion for California businesses trying to link up with their Midwest and East Coast partners.

The final reason to oppose the ballot measure is that California doesn't have the power to make the change on its own. President Lyndon Johnson signed the Uniform Time Act into law in 1966. The legislation gives states two options: operating on standard time throughout the year or observing daylight-saving time from the last Sunday in April to the last Sunday of October. That was later amended to the current time frame in the 1970s in an effort to conserve energy. Arizona and Hawaii are the only two states operating on standard time year around.

It's impossible to predict what Congress would do if Californians pass Prop 7, but it should be clear that this is an issue that should be dealt with at the federal level, with an eye to creating as much uniformity and as less confusion as possible.

Chu cites statistics showing that there are more traffic accidents when drivers lose an hour of sleep in the spring and a slight increase of heart attacks, as well. But the consequences of permanent daylight-saving time are much worse.

Vote no on Prop. 7.

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