

## Time – and money – at stake in Florida-led proposal to extend daylight saving

By John Haughey | The Center Square

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(The Center Square) – Daylight saving time could be extended for one year if a fast-tracked federal bill sponsored by Florida’s two U.S. senators is adopted before Nov. 1, when clocks fall back an hour at 2 a.m. local time across much of the world.

Republican U.S. Sens. Marco Rubio and Rick Scott filed a **two-page bill** this week to extend daylight saving time through Nov. 7, 2021, eliminating the requirement to push clocks back an hour in fall and forward an hour in spring for one year.

Rubio filed last year the Sunshine Protection Act of 2019, which would create permanent daylight saving time for all time zones nationwide. The bill awaits a hearing before the Senate’s Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

Rubio and Scott said suspending daylight saving time would save energy, prevent traffic injuries and reduce crime while improving physical fitness, reducing childhood obesity and benefitting the agricultural economy.

**The Florida Chamber of Commerce and state business associations maintain an extra hour of sunlight in the winter, during peak tourist season, would translate into more sales.**

“Our government has asked a lot of the American people over the past seven months, and keeping the nation on Daylight Saving Time is just one small step we can take to help ease the burden,” Rubio said in a statement. “More daylight in the after school hours is critical to helping families and children endure this challenging school year. Studies have shown many benefits of a year-round Daylight Saving Time, and while I believe we should make it permanent all year around, I urge my colleagues to – at the very least – work with me to avoid changing the clocks this fall.”

Scott cited COVID-19 shutdowns as justification for extending daylight saving time.

“After months of staying inside amid the coronavirus pandemic, families across the nation could use a little more sunshine and time to enjoy all that Florida has to offer,” Scott said.

As Florida governor in 2018, Scott signed the Sunshine Protection Act, which declared Florida will adopt daylight saving time year-round if Congress amends the Uniform Time Act of 1966, which preempts state and local law from regulating daylight saving time.

The bill, which was co-sponsored by then-U.S. Rep. Jeannette Nunez, now Florida’s lieutenant governor, passed in the state Senate, 33-2, and the House, 103-11.

The House version was sponsored by state Rep. Heather Fitzenhagen, R-Fort Myers. It originally called for Florida to move into the Atlantic Time Zone for nine months and be an hour ahead of the eastern United States and two hours ahead of the Central Time Zone, where much of the Florida Panhandle is located.

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Uniform Time Act in 1966. It established daylight saving time from the last Sunday in April through the last Sunday in October.

Daylight saving time dates have been amended twice, with the Energy Policy Act of 2005 adding four weeks to daylight saving time. It changed the start to the second Sunday in March and the end to the first Sunday in November.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, which oversees standardized time zones, says daylight saving time saves energy, prevents traffic injuries and reduces crime.

When the Energy Policy Act of 2005 added four weeks to daylight saving time in 2007, however, researchers found robberies decreased during by 7 percent, translating into \$59 million annually in avoided social costs. Another study, based on Indiana’s residential utility use, found daylight saving time resulted in a 1% overall increase in electricity demand.

Rubio said he will invoke Rule 14, which would allow the bill to bypass committee reviews to get it onto the Senate floor before time runs out on daylight saving time for this year.