

## Permanent Daylight Saving Time: Good For Our Health?

BY HAYLEY JENNINGS ON FEBRUARY 26, 2020

In just a few short weeks, we'll all lose an hour of sleep as clocks spring forward to switch to daylight saving time (DST). But if certain lawmakers have anything to say about it, it may be for the last time.

Several state legislatures across the country have introduced bills to stop the [biannual ritual of moving time forward or backward by an hour](#), citing public health as a major factor in the proposed changes.

### Why **An Extra Hour Of Sleep Matters**

The damaging health effects of the time switch go beyond mild sleep deprivation. The [Associated Press reported](#) in 2019 that "the springtime start of daylight saving time [is linked to] more car accidents, heart attacks in vulnerable people and other health problems that may persist throughout the time change." A [2014 University of Colorado study](#), for example, found that moving the clocks was directly correlated with over 300 deaths from those health issues. There have [even been studies](#) showing a link between a change in the body's exposure to the sun (a side effect of DST) and a higher occurrence of certain types of cancer.

Not to mention the joys of [Seasonal Affective Disorder](#), which rears its ugly head when the clocks move backward in November and the sun sets before most people leave their jobs at the end of the day.

But the question is not whether or not to end the clock-switching. An [AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll](#) conducted last year found that 71 percent of Americans would be happy to put this custom, which began back in World War I, to bed, and congressional activity suggests a change is on the way. Rather, the issue is whether or not to stay in DST or standard time year-round for better health outcomes. And on this, [politicians and scientists are split](#).

### Lawmakers Claim Yes

Generally, lawmakers have proposed a permanent switch to DST, with the consensus being that it will allow people to experience more sunlight outside of common work hours, as well as curtail some of the health risks caused by changing sleep schedules. Current [federal law allows states to elect to stay in standard time year-round](#) (which Arizona, Hawaii and most U.S. territories do), but does not allow for staying in DST permanently. State legislatures in Delaware, Maine, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington have already passed permanent DST bills, and more states have bills in the works. And Florida Sen. Marco Rubio introduced the Sunshine Protection Act in the Senate in 2019, which would make DST permanent across the country (the bill is currently in review).

### Scientists....Not So Sure

Scientists, though, are firmly against this change, advocating instead to remain in standard time all year. According to the [Society for Research on Biological Rhythms' website](#), "our body's internal biological clock needs exposure to morning sunlight to adjust to local time," so the darker mornings and lighter evenings that will occur during permanent DST will make it harder to wake up and fall asleep, respectively. This will lead to "sleep loss and a mismatch between the body clock and local time (also called social jetlag)," the society continues, both of which "have negative effects on physical and mental health, including increased risks for diabetes, obesity, heart disease, depression and some forms of cancer."

So while the allure of later sunsets year-round is exciting, especially for the average 9-5 worker, staying in [standard time may be the healthier choice](#). The question now is [whether lawmakers will listen to the experts](#).

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