



Sunshine Protection Act Fact Sheet: Daylight Saving Time vs. Standard Time

The [Sunshine Protection Act](#) (S. 623), which was passed by the Senate in March, would establish permanent daylight saving time in the U.S. in November 2023. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) supports the elimination of the biannual time changes in March and November in favor of a national, fixed, year-round time in the U.S. However, as described in an AASM [daylight saving time position statement](#) published in 2020, ***standard time aligns best with human circadian biology and provides distinct benefits for public health and safety.***

Time and Human Biology

A [Congressional Research Service report](#) notes that the U.S. established standard time along with four standard time zones in 1883. In the middle of each time zone, the standard time of noon is aligned with the time of day when the sun passes directly overhead. This alignment is important for the body because sunlight is the most powerful external cue for the human circadian rhythm, the internal “body clock” that regulates the timing of alertness, sleepiness, and other biological functions.

By artificially shifting the clock time an hour forward, daylight saving time causes a misalignment between the clock time and solar time, which interferes with the timing of our circadian rhythm. This disruption results in a condition known as “social jet lag,” which is associated with an increased risk of obesity, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and depression. If daylight saving time becomes permanent, then Americans will be living with social jet lag year-round.

The Dark Side of Daylight Saving Time

Rather than “saving” light, daylight saving time shifts the clock time of daylight hours, allowing it to remain light later in the day. However, the trade-off is that daylight saving time also shifts the clock time of sunrise, causing it to remain dark later in the morning. During the winter months, permanent daylight saving time would delay sunrise until after 8 a.m. in much of the country, and after 9 a.m. in some states that are farther north.

These long, dark mornings would make it difficult to wake up for school and work, and the safety of children would be jeopardized while waiting at the bus stop and walking to school in the dark. The extended morning darkness also would be problematic for people who experience seasonal affective disorder. Morning sunlight is essential for mood regulation, especially during the shorter days of winter.

The Time When Daylight Saving Time Failed

We know that establishing permanent daylight saving time would be a mistake because we've tried it before, and it failed. In December 1973, Congress enacted the Emergency Daylight Saving Time Energy Conservation Act of 1973, which established a two-year trial period of permanent daylight saving time starting Jan. 6, 1974.

According to a [June 1974 interim report](#) from the Department of Transportation, a national survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Chicago found that 79% of Americans supported the concept of permanent daylight saving time when surveyed in December 1973. By February 1974, after implementation of permanent daylight saving time, support plummeted to just 42%. The primary reason for opposition to permanent daylight saving time was that children had to go to school in the dark during the winter months.

After just one winter of permanent daylight saving time, Congress reversed course by amending the legislation to reinstate standard time during the winter months beginning in November 1974, as noted in the [July 1975 final report](#) from the DOT. The permanent daylight saving time experiment lasted less than one year.

The AASM agrees that it is time to stop the biannual time change, but it is also essential to recognize that permanent daylight saving time will have serious unintended consequences, as it did when it was enacted in 1973 and repealed less than a year later. The AASM believes that permanent standard time is the best option for our health.

About the American Academy of Sleep Medicine

Established in 1975, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) is advancing sleep care and enhancing sleep health to improve lives. The AASM has a combined membership of 11,000 accredited member sleep centers and individual members, including physicians, scientists and other health care professionals (aasm.org).

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