

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce Chair Janice D. Schakowsky
Hearing on, “Changing Times: Revisiting Spring Forward, Fall Back”

March 9, 2022

When I was a new Member, Congress voted on changes to how we observe Daylight Saving Time.

I was surprised: we have the power to change time itself.

Today, we exercise that power as we discuss Daylight Saving Time, the period from the spring to the fall when we all set our clocks ahead one hour.

Standardizing time across the country has its roots in the growth of railroads across America in the late 19th century when it became imperative to regulate timekeeping to avoid confusion with trade and travel.

In 1918, Congress established five time zones to provide a standard time and created Daylight Saving Time following its adoption by Europe in World War II.

After the war, Daylight Saving Time was abolished at the federal level, though localities had the option to continue to observe it.

This resulted in confusion, so the Interstate Commerce Commission recommending that Congress reexamine the issue.

The Uniform Time Act of 1966 set up the basic system we use today when we spring forward and fall back to observe Daylight Saving Time, as we will this upcoming Sunday.

History shows that Daylight Saving Time has benefits and costs. The growing public interest in this topic, and action on the state level, bring us here today to examine the issue.

Some argue that when we spring forward and lose an hour of sunlight in the morning this impacts our health, school children’s commutes to school, and, potentially, traffic safety.

On the other hand, there are those who contend that the extra hour of sunlight in the evening can be a boon to restaurants, commerce, and tourism.

Supporters of Daylight Saving Time claim it is an energy saver and point to a 2008 report by the Department of Energy which found that Daylight Saving Time saves 1.2 terraWatts of energy per year, though other studies have had more mixed results.

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Studies have found that the transition itself from Standard Time to Daylight Saving Time and back again has health impacts. These recent studies found that the transition causes cumulative sleep loss and may result in more heart attacks and mood disorders.

Today, we hear from experts who can illuminate these issues. I look forward to our discussion as we learn more about the benefits and costs of Daylight Saving Time.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.