



Time to Repeal Daylight Saving Time?

The Aborigines of Frago-Mungo Land beat the ground with a Kooji-bird feather for three days in early spring. They are celebrating a tradition that says berries appear on bushes only if the earth is tickled. One may smirk at those in Frago-Mungo, but at least they enjoy their cultural tradition. Critics say that Americans are forced to suffer many delusions for their ridiculous ritual. There is an “earth tickling ceremony” here too. It’s called Daylight Saving Time. Those who object to the practice say that like feather-dusting the earth, it doesn’t do much good, but it still continues year after year. A growing number of people think it’s an insane practice and argue for its abolition.



Why did Daylight Saving Time start? Usually two educated answers are given: “To help the farmers” or “Because of World War I — or was it WWII?” DST did indeed begin in the United States during WWI (called War Time), primarily to save fuel by reducing the need to use artificial lighting in the many rural areas that were not electrified (candles, coal, and kerosene). Although some states observed DST between the wars, it was not used nationally again until WWII. Now, however, critics point out that there are very few areas in this country that still have no electricity. Also, those wars are long over, so why does the United States still have Daylight Saving Time?

And the fact is, farmers mostly *oppose* DST. In Indiana (prior to 2006), where part of the state observed DST, and part did not, farmers generally opposed a move to Daylight Saving Time. Farm-owners and ag-workers, who must wake with the sun (or their animals) no matter what time their clocks say, are greatly inconvenienced by having to alter their schedule in order to sell products to their customers who illogically observe Daylight Saving Time.

A little more history: The earliest known reference to the idea comes from a purely whimsical 1784 essay by Benjamin Franklin called “Turkey versus Eagle, McCauley is my Beagle,” and expanded in his essay titled “An Economic Project.” He proposed the “time saving scheme” in order to save money on whale oil needed to fuel his lamps. The [Uniform Time Act](#) of 1966 provided the basic framework for standardizing the changes between Daylight Saving and Standard Time that we now follow across the United States — prior to that each state set its own rules. Congress has tinkered with it many times since. There are 70-some other nations that enforce various forms of summer time change, and about 70-some different rules for its use.

Over the years, supporters have advanced new reasons behind enacting DST. One new rationale is safety — some believing that if there is more daylight at the end of the day, there will be fewer accidents. The fact that this “benefit” comes only at the cost of less daylight in the morning seems to escape those advocates. When year-round Daylight Time was tried briefly in 1973 (as a supposed fuel



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saver during that year's energy crisis), the reason it was repealed was because of an increase in the number of school bus accidents in the morning. Further, a study of traffic accidents throughout Canada in 1991 and 1992 by Stanley Coren of the University of British Columbia before, during, and immediately after the "spring forward" in April found an 8-percent jump in traffic accidents on the Monday after clocks were moved ahead. Professor Coren attributes the increase to the lost hour of sleep. In a letter to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, he explained, "These data show that even small changes in the amount of sleep that people get can have major consequences in everyday activities." Other researchers attribute the huge spike in morning or evening accidents to the sudden change in the amount of light during driving times. Research confirms that there can be no denying that changing the clocks has a significant cost in human lives.

While some folks claim that they would miss the late evening light, they forget the presumably similar number of folks who love the morning light. One is reminded of the tale about the old Indian chief who was told the reasons for DST and said, "Only the government could believe that cutting a foot off the top of a blanket and sewing it to the bottom, would make a longer blanket."

As mentioned above, Congress appears to want to keep tinkering with a difficult situation, and in 2007 they amended the law to start DST three weeks earlier and end it one week later. This move cost U.S. companies billions of dollars to reset automated equipment and put the United States further out of sync with the remainder of the "global community," all in the name of unproven claims that energy is being saved. Critics say that if DST saves energy, then go with it year-round, with the added benefit of having more daylight at the end of the workday; but if it doesn't save energy, then drop it.

And what about those supposed savings? Energy conservation, as the motivation for expanding Daylight Saving Time, was recently debunked when a three-year scientific study by the University of California at Berkeley was conducted in Indiana, where the change was instituted statewide in 2006, as mentioned previously. They found that DST caused a one-percent overall *increase* in residential electricity use. This increase cost each Indiana household an average of only \$3.49 per year, but almost \$9,000,000 for the whole state. Researchers also estimated the health and social costs of increased pollution emissions at \$1.7 million to \$5.5 million per year. What explains this difference from government contentions? While DST reduces demand for household lighting, it increases demand for heating in the early spring and late fall (during the dark mornings) and, even more important, it increases demand for cooling on late summer evenings. It seems Ben Franklin was right about candles, but somehow he didn't consider air-conditioning.

Many recent studies have shown an increase in heart attacks, sleep disorders, and other health problems associated with time changes and disruption of circadian rhythms. Contemporary studies have demonstrated an increase in people with "Seasonal Affective Disorder" who suffer depression, migraines, confusion, social problems, and lack of productivity whenever their schedules are disrupted. A November 2009 report published by the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences revealed that when the clocks are changed, the number of heart attacks increase by 50 percent, the rate of suicide grows by 66 percent, and 17 percent more people call for ambulance services. Russia eliminated DST in 2010. Critics say that it is evident that the physiological and psychological costs of DST are enormous.

A major excuse used today for DST is to ensure the safety of children walking to school in the dark, but with the alteration of the change schedule instituted in 2007, this undermines that reason for even more weeks than it used to. Also, in today's America, most kids either ride the bus or are car-pooled by their parents, and those who do walk to school (or bus stop) live only a few residential blocks away.



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Additionally, the darkest part of the year is during the winter time when Daylight Saving Time isn't even in effect. The problems for schools is when the time changes and it is suddenly darker, negating the reasons for not having DST year-round because of an alleged increase in bus accidents.

Many studies on business productivity and absenteeism can be cited that prove the detriment of continuing this practice. From increased efficiency to better use of travel schedules and enhanced global competitiveness, opponents of DST insist that the elimination of this impediment will help business participate in an ever-expanding economy.

Below are some useful research Web pages related to Daylight Saving Time repeal:

[About Daylight Saving](#) (good source with lots of links)

[Abrupt shift of the pattern of diurnal variation in stroke onset with daylight saving time transitions.](#)
(from NIIH and PubMed.gov)

[Daylight Saving Time disrupts humans' natural Circadian Rhythm](#) (from *Science Daily*)

[Daylight Saving Time Myths](#) (from *Skeptoid, Critical Analysis of Pop Phenomena*)

[Daylight Savings Time: A Matter of Life and Death?](#) (from *In Good Measure*)

[Daylight Savings Time and Traffic Accidents](#) (from *The New England Journal of Medicine*)

[Shifts to and from Daylight Saving Time and Incidence of Myocardial Infarction](#) (from *The New England Journal of Medicine*)

[Daylight Savings Time sure bet for increase in Accidents, Fatigue](#) (from *Selfhelp Magazine*)

[Saving Time, Saving Energy](#) (from the California Energy Commission)

[Sleep Deficit, Fatal Accidents and the spring shift to Daylight Saving Time](#) (Internet Association for Biomedical Sciences)

[Daylight Saving health concerns valid](#) (from PolitiFact Georgia)

[Daylight Saving time and Trucker Fatigue](#) (from [blog4truckers](#))

[The History of Daylight Saving Time](#) (from Yahoo.com)

[Why end Daylight Saving Time?](#) (from Standardtime.com)

[Farmers shrug off daylight time](#) (from the *Journal Gazette*)

[Russia abolishes DST practice](#) (from R T News)

(Author's note: The only websites I can find for "reasons to keep Daylight Saving Time" are to retain it for year-round use.)



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