



## **Save daylight all the time or not at all?**

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The nation, state and northwest Lower Michigan are at a critical juncture. It is not hyperbole to say that how we respond now to the pressing matters of inflation, supply chain disruptions, workforce housing, broadband access, labor shortages and COVID will shape our economic productivity and growth well into the future.

Yet an admittedly more minor issue also will soon disrupt households, businesses and communities alike. However, unlike some of the more significant economic problems facing us today that are complex and not easily solved, there is an attainable solution.

Like clockwork, twice every year, most Americans switch their clocks one hour forward or backward for Daylight Saving Time (DST). DST dates back to World War I as an effort to save on fuel in the summer months. However, the currently designated dates (the second Sunday in March and the first Sunday in November) for Daylight Saving Time weren't federally enacted until 1966. So, on Nov. 7, we will again set our clocks back an hour — to where they were eight months ago.

This back and forth with the hour hand is not without issue.

Even focusing just on energy usage as the metric to continue with the status quo, much of the available data casts doubt on significant energy cost savings.

Also, Daylight Saving Time isn't universal across the country. Both Hawaii and Arizona operate within Standard Time all year-round. American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands also do not observe DST.

Even Michigan chose not to participate initially in 1967, and didn't until 1972.

A big argument for abolishing Daylight Saving Time in favor of Standard Time is the establishment of a more straightforward system with less governmental intervention.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian-leaning think tank, recently suggested that the U.S. ditch DST altogether and adopt Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) instead. By doing so, there would be significant movement toward a global 24-hour time standard that uses “true time”—time determined by an array of near-exact atomic clocks set to the Earth's rotation.

Yet, DST has been so popular for many here in the United States that some politicians want to make it year-round, which would allow for more sun in the later part of the day. There is significant momentum for that idea, too — 19 states enacted some legislation or resolution of support (including Michigan in 2021).

All with the understanding that our current approach to DST of pushing an hour back and forth throughout the year increases everything from tardiness, vehicle collisions, obesity, robberies and even deaths.

Moreover, a study by JP Morgan Chase in 2016 found that when we turn our clocks back, America's economic activity drops by 2-5 percent until we “spring forward” again. In an era of hyper-politicization, making DST year-round and permanent is interestingly bipartisan across the country.

There are valid points to both the “end Daylight Saving Time (a.k.a. ‘Fall Back Forever’)” argument and to the the “make Daylight Saving Time year-round (a.k.a. ‘Sunshine Protection Act’)” argument.

I think we can all agree that switching our clocks twice a year is irritating at best — and negatively affects business, employee and household productivity. The bottom line is that the current bi-annual clock change ritual doesn't make sense anymore.

Whether Daylight Saving Time is eventually adopted year-round or entirely removed by Congress, we should support a future when we can just set our clocks once and then leave them alone.

All that said, I am humbly reminded that Will Rogers once famously quipped, “Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.”