Permanent Daylight Saving Time vs. Permanent Standard Time

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Issue

This report briefly summarizes some of the arguments for adopting either permanent Daylight Saving Time (DST) or permanent Standard Time, particularly regarding their potential impacts on people's health.

Summary

Daylight Saving Time (DST) generally refers to the period between the second Sunday in March and the first Sunday in November when clocks are set one hour ahead of Standard Time, resulting in more darkness in the morning hours and more daylight in the evening hours. Various studies have found that shifting between the two time systems is possibly associated with health impacts such as increases in heart attacks, emergency room visits, and traffic accidents among other things. To end the twice-yearly time changes and their negative impacts, proponents have advocated for adopting either permanent DST or permanent Standard Time. Below, we briefly summarize some of the arguments for adopting each type of time system permanently, particularly regarding potential impacts on people's health. This report is not a comprehensive study but rather a gateway resource to some of the studies available, with hyperlinks to the underlying studies embedded below.

Permanent Daylight Saving Time

Advocates for adopting permanent DST argue that the extra hour of light in the evening would decrease energy consumption and improve economic conditions by encouraging increased retail sales and leisure activities in the evening. It could also reduce crime, based on a study in *The Review of Economics and Statistics,* which found a 7% decrease in robberies following the shift to

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DST. On health-related issues more specifically, advocates argue that increased daylight in the evening could help reduce depression because the transition from DST to Standard Time is associated with an increase in the incidence rate of unipolar depressive episodes. They also suggest that it could decrease the risk of car accidents, with one study finding that over 360 lives would be saved each year.

Permanent Standard Time

In 2020, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) issued a position statement that cited several health benefits in support of adopting permanent Standard Time, particularly its better alignment with human circadian biology (i.e., the 24-hour internal clock that regulates cycles of alertness and sleepiness by responding to light changes in the environment). According to the statement, studies indicate that the body clock does not adjust to DST even after several months. Because of this, permanent DST could lead to a "perpetual discrepancy between the innate biological clock and the extrinsic environmental clock." This misalignment between the innate circadian rhythm and the demands of work, school, or other obligations (known as "social jet lag") has been associated with increased risk of obesity, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and depression. The position statement also notes that adopting permanent DST would undo the benefits of delaying school start times in jurisdictions that have done so.

The AASM statement and a similar report in the *Journal of Biological Rhythms* acknowledge that few studies have looked at the long-term, chronic effects of DST (as opposed to the effects felt right after a time change). However, both argue that because Standard Time more closely aligns with human circadian biology, switching to permanent Standard Time could produce beneficial effects for public health and safety.

Additional Information

Additional information on the history of DST, its legal framework, and attempts to change it are available in OLR Report 2017-R-0329 and in this report from the Congressional Research Service.

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