

Could today's time change be the last?

BY ORION DONOVAN-SMITH

The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.)

Congress may be more divided than ever, but there's one thing Republicans and Democrats can agree on: No one likes losing an hour of sleep when the nation "springs forward" at the start of daylight saving time every March.

Momentum has been building across the country in recent years to do away with the twice-yearly switch between daylight saving and standard time. Starting in 2018, when Florida's legislature became the first to pass a law to adopt year-round daylight saving time, 14 other states have followed suit.

"Daylight saving time has never saved us from anything," fictional New Hampshire Rep. Jonah Ryan said on HBO's "Veep" in 2017, a likely catalyst for the veritable tidal wave of anti-time change legislation that swept the country soon thereafter.

State lawmakers in Washington passed legislation to "ditch the switch" in 2019, and Idaho's legislature adopted a bill a year later that would allow North Idaho to follow Washington's lead. Oregon's legislature also has voted to ditch standard time.

There's just one problem: While states can opt out of daylight saving time — as Hawaii and most of Arizona have done — federal law requires an act of Congress to allow states to adopt daylight saving time on a permanent basis.

Northwest push

Lawmakers in both the House and Senate have introduced bipartisan bills to let states like Washington, along with north Idaho, permanently switch to daylight saving time. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., was among eight senators who reintroduced the "Sunshine Protection Act of 2021" on Tuesday.

"Springing forward and falling back year after year only creates unnecessary confusion while harming Americans' health and our economy," Wyden said in a statement. "Making Daylight Saving permanent would give folks an hour back of sunshine during the winter months when we need it most."

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., co-sponsored the bill in the previous Congress and plans to do so again,



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin file

A doe pauses to check her surroundings while feeding on a patch of tall grass near Greenwood Avenue in Bend shortly before sunrise last year.

her office said.

"Moving to permanent daylight saving time here in Washington state isn't just a smart move for public health, safety, and our economy — it's the overwhelming will of the people," Murray said in a statement. "The state has taken action, and I am determined to make this policy a reality for us at the federal level."

Democratic Rep. Adam Smith said the consensus in his district, which stretches from Tacoma to Bellevue, is that the bad effects of the twice-yearly switch outweigh the good.

"After many conversations with my constituents and community leaders, we all agree — daylight savings time should be permanent," Smith said in a statement. "After a 100-year experiment with shifting our clocks back and forth, the practice has only succeeded in increasing energy usage, creating a confusing map of varying time zones, and disrupting sleep schedules."

Rep. Dan Newhouse, a Republican who represents Central Washington, co-sponsored another bill with the same goal on Monday.

It started as a joke

Benjamin Franklin suggested the idea of daylight saving time — as a

joke — in a 1784 essay, but the United States didn't adopt the system until 1918, as a World War I-era effort to conserve fuel and electricity by extending daylight hours.

The government abolished daylight saving time at the federal level after the war, but some states kept using it. The resulting confusion led Congress to pass the Uniform Time Act in 1966, which reimposed the spring-time switch to daylight saving time across the country but gave states the ability to opt out.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, which enforces time zones and daylight saving time, maintains daylight saving time saves energy and reduces crime and traffic accidents. Proponents of never again "falling back" to standard time tend to agree, and wonder why the nation doesn't just stick with daylight time all the time.

"It's just annoying — and not only is it annoying, it wreaks havoc on people's health," said Washington state Rep. Marcus Riccelli, a Spokane Democrat who sponsored that state's bipartisan bill to abolish daylight saving time.

Research has shown "springing forward" causes lost sleep and increases the risk of stroke and heart attack. A 2020 study found the switch increases

the risk of fatal traffic accidents by 6% for a week each March, estimating about 28 fatal crashes could be prevented each year if the U.S. did away with the annual change.

University of Washington law professor Steve Calandrillo has argued adopting permanent daylight saving time would reduce crime, pointing to data showing crime rates rise during darkness at the end of the day. More early-morning darkness — the effect of daylight saving time — does not bring the same spike in crime.

'Fascinating ... how much consensus there is'

Congress didn't have time to act before daylight saving time went into effect this weekend, but Riccelli is hopeful lawmakers will get it done before Nov. 7, when most of the country is set to revert to standard time. He said he has spoken with aides to Sen. Maria Cantwell, the Washington Democrat who chairs the U.S. Senate committee with jurisdiction over the Department of Transportation, about holding a hearing to build momentum for the cause.

Riccelli conceded adopting year-round daylight saving time is no one's top priority in the middle of a pandemic, but he said the issue gives

Spring forward

Did you remember to set your clocks ahead one hour this morning?

lawmakers an opportunity to escape partisan gridlock and show voters Congress can get something done.

"In the midst of COVID — from housing to health care, economic recovery, etc. — it certainly isn't that top-tier issue, but it's an issue whose time has come," Riccelli said.

"It's fascinating how much it annoys people and how much consensus there is. People want to see Congress act right now. COVID has been a dark time, and Congress can be looked at as a broken clock, and this is one thing I think they can get right."

If Congress fails to act, Riccelli hopes Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg will act to move the entire Pacific time zone to permanent daylight saving time, something he said he has been told is within the transportation chief's authority.

"The secretary of transportation, with the stroke of a pen, could change our whole time zone," he said. "I think Mayor Pete is a common-sense person, and if we have to, we could make the appeal directly to the secretary of transportation."

A Department of Transportation spokeswoman said in an email such a change would require an act of Congress and is outside the secretary's authority.

Buttigieg appeared Thursday on Jimmy Kimmel Live, and the late-night host was flabbergasted to learn Buttigieg might have a say on the matter.

"We gotta get rid of this daylight saving time!" Kimmel pleaded. "My son, he woke up at 6 o'clock this morning. We must do away with this curse."

"I'll see what I can do," Buttigieg replied with a laugh.

Riccelli and other advocates of ditching the switch hope Congress will take the issue more seriously.

"With the overwhelming bipartisan support," Riccelli said, "I don't see why Congress wouldn't want to take this opportunity to show that on something simple, something common sense, we can get something done and hopefully never 'fall back' again."

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Leveraging Virtual Connections for Lifelong Learners.

With the pandemic continuing, older adults across the state embrace virtual platforms to study various topics and engage with one another through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Oregon.

During this ongoing pandemic, so many of our citizens are dealing with the loneliness and isolation it causes. Senior citizens are impacted by this isolation even more, as we are particularly vulnerable to the virus and potentially less mobile than others.



OLLI-UE in Central Oregon members on a field trip to the Erickson Air Museum outside of Madras, February 2020.

We would like to offer an option for dealing with this situation: it is called the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Oregon, or "OLLI-UE" for short. We are part of a network of 124 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes around the country, all associated with universities. Philanthropist Bernard Osher started the OLLI Institutes to encourage lifelong learning in adults aged 50 and better who want to learn for the joy of learning. We have hundreds of members in both Central Oregon and in the Eugene/Springfield area and recently expanded our reach to engage participants in Northwest Oregon. Although we are sponsored by UO, there is no requirement to have

an affiliation with the University of Oregon or to be an alumnus.

"At OLLI-UE, I have found my people! My outlook on life is improved immensely! I jumped in with both feet and signed up to volunteer. It helped me make connections even faster. It has also kept me busy during the pandemic. Moving to Zoom has helped me stay connected."

Elizabeth Polidan, Central Oregon member

OLLI-UE is an ideal choice for connecting via shared interests and learning everything you desire, from art, to science, history, international affairs, writing and book groups, and field trips. We have a modest number of dedicated staff who are critical to helping us run the programs, but our members all volunteer to help find speakers, lead classes, and make recommendations to improve our organization.

Pre-pandemic, we were meeting at the Elks Lodge in Bend and at the University of Oregon's Baker Downtown Center in Eugene. Now, we are holding all our classes and meetings on Zoom. While this was a bit of a challenge in the beginning, we have adapted to the new format and expect that when we once again meet

in person, we will continue to share many programs in a hybrid model. The bright spot in this new format has been more sharing of classes with our counterparts in Eugene and Northwest Oregon, and now we don't want to give up those shared experiences. Engaging via video has also enabled people in remote locations to attend and provides a feeling of connection between members.

"The thing I like most about OLLI-UE is the members. We have a tremendous diversity of people with real life experience and backgrounds that span the entire spectrum. This opens up the possibility to learn far more than you would get from reading a book or watching a video. Before the pandemic, we were able to tour the Bend Seed Extractory because an OLLI-UE member was a professional in agriculture research and was able to get us access."

Ron Polidan, Central Oregon member

We OLLI-UE members welcome fellow lifelong learners with open arms. We know that curiosity never retires, and you will have the benefits of



At the University of Oregon



Central Oregon OLLI-UE member Ronald Polidan examines seeds through a dissection microscope extracted at the Deschutes National Forest's Bend Seed Extractory.

keeping your mind active and engaged, and have the opportunity to share with others what you have learned and experienced.

In fact, we are offering a chance to Discover OLLI-UE the week of March 15-19 with a sampler of classes all week, including art, history, science, international relations, music, and philosophy. Learn more about this unique year-round program for active Oregonians who know that curiosity is ageless.

This event is free, but advanced registration is required. Register today https://osher.uoregon.edu/discover_olli or 800-824-2714. Participants are asked to register once for the entire week.

Loneliness is banished when you join us. We look forward to welcoming you!

