

MAY 2019

The issue:

An increasing number of states are considering legislation to establish permanent daylight saving time (DST), which would require federal government approval. Broadcasters oppose state-specific time changes that would undermine our ability to deliver news, weather and entertainment programming at our audience's desired time, especially in television and radio markets that stretch across multiple states.

Here's why:

Daylight saving time (DST) has existed on and off for the last 100 years in the United States. In the early part of the 20th century, when the country was not at war, states individually chose whether and when to change time standards. This patchwork approach caused problems, leading Congress to pass the Uniform Time Act of 1966. This law imposed uniform time observance across the country, including setting annual beginning and end dates for daylight saving time. While the stop and start dates have changed over time, the United States now observes eight months of DST, and only four months of standard time (November-March).

In recent years, individual state moves to eliminate the biannual changing of the clocks has increased. Proposals that would keep an individual state on DST year-round require Congress to amend the Uniform Time Act in order to implement them.

Broadcasters oppose state-by-state time shifts, because adopting different time standards on an individual basis would put each state out of sync with its neighbors, making program scheduling as chaotic as the patchwork time zone map. This is especially problematic in television and radio markets that stretch across state lines. Some broadcasters may be forced to air shows on tape delay and setting start times for live events such as sports and awards shows would become especially difficult. Drive-time radio in markets that cross state lines would suddenly reach only half the intended audience at once. Further, station programming may comply with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules for the time a program is permitted to air in one state but violate the rules in another.

The bottom line:

Individual state time changes would wreak havoc on many industries, including local television and radio broadcasters. Congress should uphold the reasoning behind the Uniform Time Act and ensure that states in the same time zones remain aligned.