By: Laura Kliewer

This past year marked the 100th anniversary of daylight saving time in the United States, and it also included the introduction of numerous bills — in the Midwest and elsewhere — seeking an end to the “spring forward, fall back” ritual that now occurs in communities across the country.

Similar proposals are likely to appear in the year ahead. Entering 2019, only two U.S. states, Arizona and Hawaii, did not observe daylight saving time — an option for all states under federal law. At one time, much of Indiana did not observe daylight saving time, but that changed with the passage of legislation 14 years ago instituting its use across the state.

Over the past two years, bills to end the use of daylight saving time were introduced in a majority of Midwestern states, including Iowa (SF 168), Kansas (HB 2519), Michigan (HB 4011), Minnesota (HF 2458), Nebraska (LB 309) and North Dakota (SB 2167). The proposals in Michigan and North Dakota also would have created a single time zone in those respective states. (Those two states are currently among six in the Midwest without a uniform time zone; see map.)

None of these bills passed, nor did legislation in Illinois (HB 424) and South Dakota (HB 1179) calling for year-round use of daylight saving time.

In 2018, though, two states outside the Midwest adopted policies that seek to adopt daylight saving time year-round — Florida, by an act of the Legislature (HB 1013); and California, via a vote of the people (Proposition 7). Changes in federal law, however, are required before states can switch to year-round daylight saving time. Federal legislation was introduced in July (HR 6331) that would give states the authority to decide how they observe daylight saving time. Other proposals (S 2537 and HR 5279) call for the entire country to observe daylight saving time year-round.

Daylight saving time originally was established by the U.S. Congress as a way to conserve energy, and the U.S. Department of Energy cites “reduced electricity use in buildings” as the rationale for continuing this federal policy. Conversely, opponents of the policy cite research linking it to disturbed sleep, heart attacks and episodes of depression.

Meanwhile, the controversy continues in states over how to set time. This fall in Indiana, three children died when they were hit by a pickup truck as they attempted to board a school bus in the morning. Sen. Eric Bassler told The Indianapolis Star that “if it were daylight, or even sort of daylight, it would be more noticeable for drivers to see the kids as they approach.” He wants the entire state to move from the Eastern time zone to the Central time zone.

Question of the Month highlights an inquiry sent to the CSG Midwest Information Help Line.

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