

House Bill 1259
Senate State and Local Government Committee
Testimony in Opposition to HB 1259
March 27, 2025

Chairwoman Roers and Senate State and Local Government Committee members, my name is Jenifer Murray, District 37. I reside in Dickinson, ND, and am providing testimony opposing HB 1259's current engrossment.

It is commonly discussed that time changes have adverse effects, including schedule and sleep pattern disruptions. These can lead to behavioral and mental health issues, irritability and mood disturbances, decreased work productivity, and even increased risks of traffic incidents. Numerous polls have found that as many as 75% of Americans favor no longer changing clocks twice a year due to these issues and inconveniences. The inherent debate is whether to enact either permanent standard time or permanent daylight savings time.

The Uniform Time Act of 1966 prohibits states from observing permanent Daylight Savings Time without an amendment of the federal law. The Sunshine Protection Act has been introduced in Congress each term since 2018. The bill, which would make Daylight Savings Time permanent, passed the Senate in 2021 but has died in committee on all other attempts. Since 2018, 18 states have enacted legislation to provide for year-round Daylight Savings Time if Congress allowed such a change and, in some cases, if surrounding states enact the same legislation.

The Uniform Time Act does allow states to exempt themselves from observing Daylight Savings Time through state law. Passing HB 1259 would enact this exemption and permanently set the entire state of North Dakota on Standard Time. Although the prospect of not having to change the clocks twice a year is enticing, converting to permanent Standard Time would create significant daily challenges for those of us in the southwest corner of the state who live in the Mountain Time Zone.

If this bill were to pass, our region would essentially become an isolated time zone "island" when our bordering states observe Daylight Savings Time from March through November. For example, traveling 100 miles in any direction from Dickinson would be a one-hour time difference for 65% of the year. Southwest North Dakota would have a two-hour time difference from central and eastern South Dakota and Minnesota. This misalignment would create unnecessary complications for scheduling, travel, commerce, and overall coordination with our neighboring states. The benefits gained by not having to change clocks twice a year would be minimized or eliminated by dealing with the daily coordination, confusion, and stress of living in this time zone island.

Living in Mountain Time and doing business with partners in Central Time already results in shortened productivity. An hour is lost each morning, two hours are lost over lunch, and an hour is lost every afternoon because typical operating hours do not align. Residents on the borders would experience this reality and feel this frustration over the one-hour difference when our surrounding states change to Daylight Savings.

Additionally, adopting permanent Standard Time in our region would result in daylight (Civil Twilight) beginning as early as 3 a.m. during summer months and sunset occurring before 8 p.m. on the longest day of the year. While there may be scientific arguments for more morning daylight, the reality is that most people are not awake at 3 a.m. to benefit from it. However, many North Dakotans appreciate the extended evening daylight that Daylight Savings Time provides, allowing for outdoor activities and community engagement during warmer months. Enjoying the afternoon and evening warmth is a treasure during the few short summer months North Dakota experiences.

Arguments could be made that converting the entire state of North Dakota to the Central Time Zone would alleviate the issue of southwest North Dakota becoming an 'island' for most of the year. I do not favor being forced into changing to the Central Time Zone. Under the Uniform Time Act, the Department of Transportation (DOT) can move a time zone boundary. The DOT's guidance to begin the proceeding recommends an official request by the County Commissioners of the affected counties, the Governor, or the ND Legislature. Although a vote of the people is not necessary, the issue was on the ballot in Stark and Billings County in 2010. It was rejected by 74% of the voters in Stark County and 82% in Billings County, establishing that these counties prefer to remain in Mountain Time.

If eliminating seasonal time change is truly the desire, I propose adopting legislation establishing year-round Daylight Savings Time upon authorization by federal law. This type of legislation has already passed in Minnesota and Montana. Switching North Dakota to permanent Standard Time while our surrounding states continue to change their clocks will only create challenges that far outweigh the twice-a-year disruption to sleep.

Until our surrounding states also move to permanent Standard or Daylight Savings Time, this bill would create unnecessary confusion and inconvenience, especially for those in Mountain Time. I strongly urge you to consider a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation on HB 1259.

Thank you for your time and consideration.