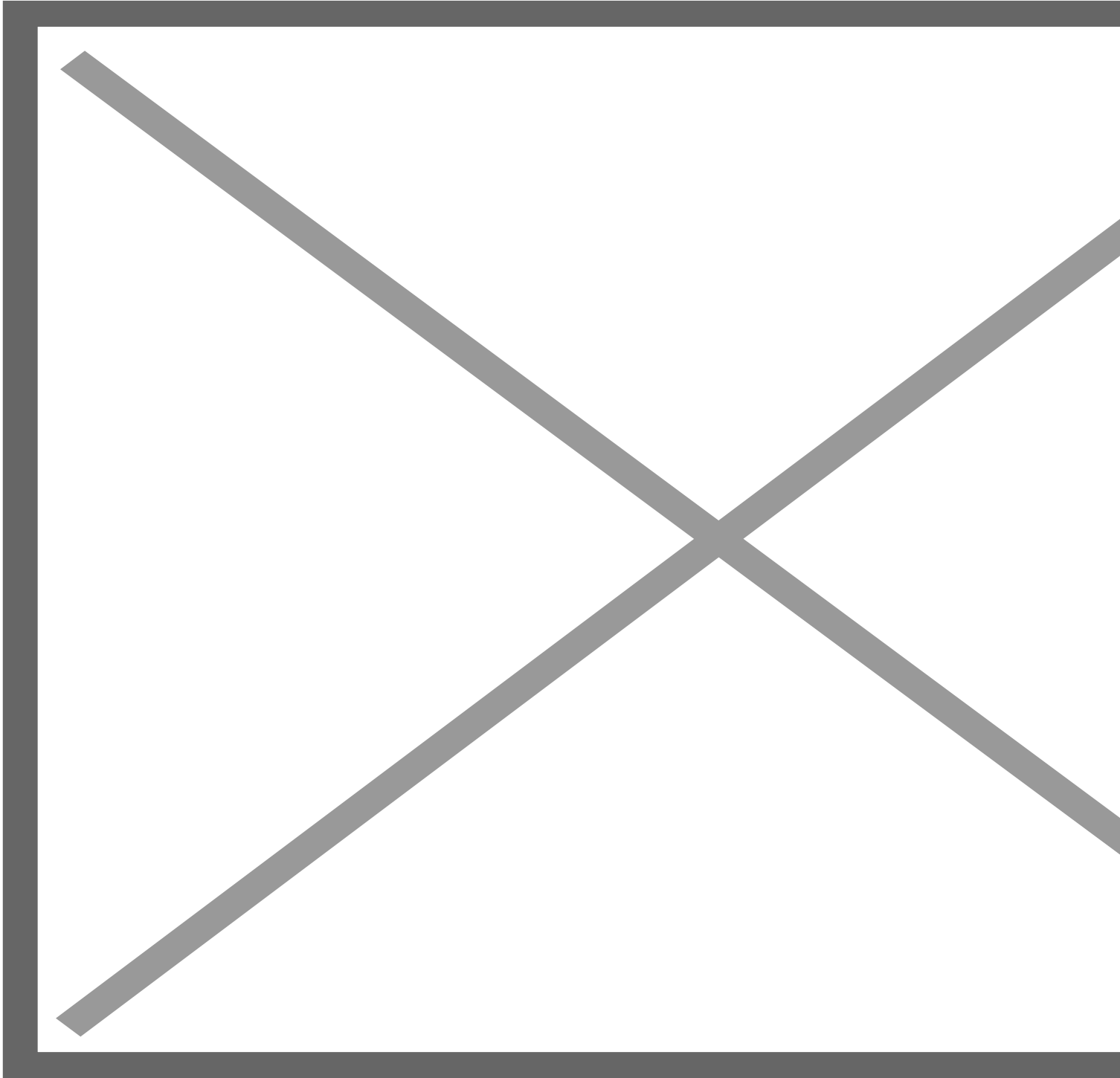


Orthodox Jewish groups oppose daylight saving bill, argue it would disrupt prayer

by [Yonat Shimron](#)

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Daily shacharit at the Altenu, an Orthodox synagogue in New York City. (Instagram)

Making daylight saving time permanent moved a step closer to reality earlier this month, when the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to pass a measure to eliminate the annual clock-changing ritual.

But some Orthodox Jewish organizations are fighting to prevent the bill from becoming law.

The measure, called the Sunshine Protection Act, passed in a 308-117 vote in the House on July 14. Its passage in the Senate is uncertain. President Donald Trump has championed the effort, describing [on his Truth Social account](#) moving the clocks forward and back as a “ridiculous, twice yearly production.”

If passed, the bill would give people in the US an extra hour of sunshine in the evenings during the winter. But it would also push winter sunrises one hour later. That’s of concern to Orthodox Jews, who pray three times a day, beginning with the Shacharit morning prayer service, which by tradition cannot begin in the dark.

“The bottom line is, if prayers have to start an hour later that will have a direct effect on people getting to work and on when schools can start,” said Rabbi A.D. Motzen, national director of government affairs for Agudath Israel of America, an organization representing US Orthodox Jews.

A constellation of other Orthodox Jewish groups also opposes the measure, including the Orthodox Union and the Coalition for Jewish Values.

In Jewish law, some prayers, such as those in the morning service, can only be said communally, in a quorum of 10 Jewish adults, called a minyan. That requirement means going to synagogue every morning before heading out for work or school and saying prayers, such as the Shema, the central prayer of Jewish life, collectively. The morning service typically lasts 35 minutes but on some occasions can last close to an hour.

“It becomes a communal issue when, for example, a synagogue that has had a morning prayer service for 100 years suddenly does not have a quorum of 10 men who can show up at the prayer time close to 9 o’clock because they have jobs,” Motzen said.

Motzen, who works in the Washington, DC, office of Agudath Israel, said the organization already has the support of Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., who last year [objected](#) to fast-tracking the bill.

Orthodox Jews, however, make up only 9 percent of the estimated 5.8 million Jewish adults in the US, according to [Pew Research Center](#). Larger Jewish groups have not publicly taken a position.

Congress has grappled with turning back the clocks many times. In 1974, it tried to abandon clock-switching, but repealed the law a few months later following public outcry. In 2022, the Senate unanimously passed a measure making daylight savings time permanent, but the bill died in the House.

Orthodox Jews are not the only constituencies opposed to the change. Some medical and health advocates argue that the human body’s internal clock is better aligned with the sun during standard time rather than daylight saving time. School boards and parents are also concerned about children walking to school in pitch-black conditions during winter mornings.

That latter concern, which Motzen described as a safety issue, is one Orthodox Jews share as well.

Making daylight saving time permanent would make sunrise after 8 a.m. in most parts of the country, and after 9 a.m. in a few select places. For example, according to a list compiled by Agudath Israel, sunrise would take place after 9 a.m., (and as late as 9:13 a.m.) for 55 days a year in South Bend, Indiana. In Detroit, Michigan, sunrise would take place after 9 a.m. for 23 days a year.

Hawaii and most of Arizona abide by standard time year round, as do Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands. —Religion News Service