

2 Regions Redrawing Their Time Zones

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The Primorye and Irkutsk regions took a step toward redrawing their time zones Wednesday following President Dmitry Medvedev's recommendation that distant regions draw closer to Moscow time.

Primorye lawmakers approved a petition to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin asking him to cut the time difference between Moscow and Vladivostok by 60 minutes — from seven hours to six, the regional administration said in a [statement](#).

The initiative, introduced to the legislature by Governor Sergei Darkin, was backed by 26 of 30 lawmakers.

Irkutsk's regional legislation approved a measure to reduce the time difference with Moscow from five hours to four.

The initiative to shed time zones came from Medvedev, who included it in his state-of-the-nation address last fall. He also called for an end to daylight saving time. Reducing time zones,

Medvedev said, would stimulate the economy and make governing easier.

Primorye Deputy Governor Alexander Shemelyov said redrawing the time zone would bring his region closer to the “natural geographical time,” the local administration's statement said. Citing unspecified medical research, he also said the change would improve the health of local residents.

The Irkutsk governor's representative to the regional legislature, Viktor Ignatenko, assured lawmakers before the vote Wednesday that the proposed change would strengthen the local economy and not have a “significant effect on the health” of residents, Interfax reported.

The time zone reform will leave Russia with nine contiguous time zones between Moscow and the Pacific Ocean, although the country will still encompass 10 zones — ranging from Moscow time minus one hour to Moscow time plus eight hours — when including the Kaliningrad exclave on the Baltic Sea.

The State Duma is currently considering a bill to abandon daylight saving time, introduced by the Soviet Union only in 1981.

Russia shed two time zones when five regions — Kamchatka, Chukotka, Kemerovo, Samara and Udmurtia — shifted an hour closer to Moscow as daylight saving time was introduced in March.

But thousands of residents in the Samara and Udmurtia regions have appealed to Putin in open online [letters](#) that complain they have lost an hour of daylight and the result has been more car accidents, crime and psychological depression.

“People's discontent has been growing recently in the region, prompting rallies,” Mikhail Matveyev, an independent Samara lawmaker, said by telephone from Samara.

He said residents would lose 200 hours of daytime this year and that the change has increased electricity consumption.

Last week, about 200 people gathered near the legislature building and shined flashlights at its windows as darkness fell at about 5 p.m., Matveyev said. He said more rallies were planned in cooperation with other affected regions.

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