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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 11, 2000
TO:
FROM: Robert E. Erickson, Research Director
SUBJECT: **Daylight Savings Time**

This memorandum is in response to your request for background information concerning daylight savings time (DST). As you know, DST is achieved by advancing the clock one hour in the spring, while standard time is resumed each fall by setting the clock back one hour.

Federal Law

Under the Federal Uniform Time Act of 1966, as amended, all states must observe DST beginning at 2 a.m. on the first Sunday in April and ending at 2 a.m. on the last Sunday in October, unless the state legislature specifies that the state will retain standard time throughout the year.

The original law required DST to start on the last Sunday in April. However, the law was amended in 1986 to require the earlier start of DST each year. The United States Department of Transportation estimated that the earlier starting date annually would save more than \$28 million in traffic accident costs and would prevent more than 1,500 injuries and 20 deaths on the highways. The bill was signed into law by then President Ronald Reagan, despite some opposition from agricultural interests.

As mentioned, this federal law allows states to exempt themselves, by law, from the observance of DST. A state must observe DST during the designated period from April to October or exempt itself entirely from the observance of DST. In addition, a 1972 amendment to this law allows a state whose boundaries lie within more than one time zone to exempt the entire area of that state within any time zone.

Only three states currently have laws in effect to exempt themselves from DST. The entire states of Arizona and Hawaii are exempt. The law in Indiana exempts the portion of the state that is in the Eastern time zone. These three areas are the only ones in the country to remain on standard time throughout the year.

Rationale for Federal Law

From 1945 until the 1960s, standard time zones and DST were observed in some regions of the United States at the discretion of the local community. This situation created much confusion.

Groups in the transportation industry began a campaign in 1962 to obtain federal legislation to establish uniformity in the observance of time nationwide. Proponents cited examples such as a 35-mile bus trip from Steubenville, Ohio, to Moundsville, West Virginia, that required seven time changes; and a government office building in Minneapolis-St. Paul where time was different on separate floors of the building during part of the DST period.

In response to these problems, Congress enacted the Uniform Time Act of 1966 which modified the time zones, made standard time mandatory in each time zone, and required the observance of DST on a standard basis. As noted previously, this act as amended remains in effect and governs the observance of DST nationwide.

Year-round DST

Year-round DST has been observed only twice in our nation's history. During World War II, year-round DST was instituted on February 9, 1942, as a way to conserve electrical power. This measure was repealed on the last Sunday in September 1945.

During the energy crisis in late 1973, Congress enacted emergency legislation to place the nation on year-round DST for a two-year trial period from January 6, 1974, through October 26, 1975. However, public opposition developed against DST during the winter months, and Congress changed the emergency legislation to reinstitute standard time in November 1974. The emergency legislation expired on the last Sunday in April 1975, and the country then returned to the observance of DST as provided in the Uniform Time Act of 1966.

Proposals in Nevada

Two proposals concerning year-round observance of DST were introduced in the 1977 Session of the Nevada Legislature.

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 45 of the 1977 Session would have memorialized Congress to allow states to adopt perpetual DST. This resolution passed both houses of the Nevada Legislature but was withheld from enrollment by the Legislative Counsel pursuant to Legislative Counsel Opinion No. 34. Unfortunately, a copy of that opinion is not available from the office of the Legislative Counsel.

Assembly Bill 611 of the 1977 Session would have required year-round observance of DST in Nevada. This bill died in the Assembly Committee on Environment and Public Resources, and no hearing was held concerning this proposal.

In 1997, additional legislation pertaining to DST was introduced. Assembly Bill 450 would have exempted Nevada from observing DST and allowed the state to remain on standard time throughout the year. One of the bill's sponsors stated that he originally wanted the bill to provide that Nevada be on DST all year round, but the federal law does not allow this action. Assembly Bill 450 was heard once on May 16, 1997, but it was not voted out of the Assembly Committee on Government Affairs.

Conclusion

Federal law establishes uniform times for the observance of DST and prohibits states from remaining on DST throughout the year. However, states are allowed to exempt themselves from the observance of DST and remain on standard time throughout the year.

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