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For public safety, a growing economy, energy savings, sports; DAYLIGHT-SAVING TIME

BY JACK STRAYER

Fitzgerald's Daisy Buchanan called it the longest day of the year; to some, it is the summer solstice, and still others will refer to it as the first day of summer. It is the day of the year when the sun is farthest north from the equator.

There are nine time zones covering the United States and its territories -- from the eastern tip of St. Croix, where first light hits in the U.S. Virgin Islands to the western shores of Guam, where the sun finally sets on the United States each evening, technically. Actually, Guam and the rest of the Chamorro Standard Time Zone are west of the International Date Line, so the sun really sets there tomorrow evening.

Each time zone is based on increments of 15 degrees of longitude from Greenwich, England, -- hence Greenwich Mean Time. That makes a time zone about 825 miles wide.

When the sun sets on the East Coast at 8:30 p.m. EDT, it will take an additional 53 minutes before it sets on Michigan's west coast at 9:23 p.m. EDT -- same time zone, same sun, but different sunset times.

In 1986, Congress amended the Uniform Time Act of 1966 making the first Sunday in April the onset of daylight-saving time (spring forward) ending on the last Sunday in October (fall back). Prior to 1986, we sprung forward on the last Sunday in April and fell back on the first Sunday in October.

Why the change? Chief among the reasons was money.

Those extra hours of daylight at the end of the day in April amount to more than \$1 billion in additional retail sales . . . just for convenience stores. According to the National Association of Convenience

Stores, female shoppers often shop until it gets dark, so DST adds another shopping hour to each day in April. Other retailers report similar growth in sales.

The movement to amend the Uniform Time Act in 1986 was spearheaded by a wide range of interests -- from the retail industry to nurserymen; law enforcement, highway safety and fire-prevention groups; home improvement and lumber interests; amateur sports, professional sports and even the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Those who suffer from retinitis pimentosa -- night blindness -- also played a dramatic but practical role in the battle to extend daylight time.

For the most part, farmers and parents of small children hated it, but not as much as the owners of drive-in movies. The once flourishing outdoor theater

industry was the biggest victim of extended lightness.

Farmers resented the change in time because it meant working later each night in the field, keeping them away longer from family, civic and social obligations and church choir practice. "Getting up with the chickens" meant an extra hour of sleep, but you lose that advantage as the day grows late.

For public safety, a growing economy, energy savings and physical fitness and sports, however, daylight-saving time is absolutely great. DST provides safer streets, more time to shop, golf, play tennis and fish after work. There is even extra time for yard work and chores.

For parents with young children, we know the twilight is tough on you. It is tough on farmers, too. Even if we still had drive-in theaters, those farmers would be too tired to go.

Today, raise a toast to the longest day of the year and appreciate the benefits of long summer evenings.

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