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Congressional Record S. 2896 - Daylight Saving Time Repeal

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By Mr. CLARK (for himself, Mr. BENTSEN, Mr. MANSFIELD, Mr. HELMS, Mr. MOSS, Mr. COOK, and Mr. NUNN):

S. 2896. A bill to terminate the Emergency Daylight Saving Time Energy Conservation Act of 1973. Referred to the Committee on Commerce.

Mr. CLARK. Mr. President, the Senator from Montana (Mr. MANSFIELD) and I today have introduced a bill to terminate the Emergency Daylight Saving Time Act.

Recent events have pointed clearly to the need for a reassessment of the switch to daylight saving time.

When we agreed to change to year-round daylight saving time in December, it was in the midst of great concern about the severity of the energy crisis and predictions of cold homes and no gasoline.

Daylight saving time seemed like a quick way to save energy—with little or no cost to anyone. But the cost can be very high. Several schoolchildren in Florida have been killed in the dark, as we heard just minutes ago, and there are many more examples of hardship, injury, and inconvenience.

Another reason for passing daylight saving time was its potential for joining people together in an effort to save energy. My experience in Iowa has indicated that it is doing anything, but joining people together. It is creating more anger and frustration than any other single energy conservation measure.

I just spent most of this month traveling from county to county throughout the State of Iowa, holding some 25 separate meetings, where people came and talked about the problems of the country. The energy situation in general and DST in particular came up more than any other issue.

Original estimates late last year were that we might save 1 to 3 percent of our energy. Now that appears to be an exaggeration. The Federal Power Commission indicates that there is probably only about a 0.2-percent saving of energy consumption from daylight saving time. A report on energy savings from DST is not expected until June. So, we still do not have any figures on how much has been saved in the last 3 weeks.

But the results are already in on the dangers it can cause.

We should recognize that we may have made a mistake with emergency DST, and that is why I am introducing this bill today to repeal it. This bill will give us a vehicle to reexamine the evidence both for and against year-round daylight saving time. We may well have acted precipitately.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. CLARK. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I am delighted to join with the distinguished Senator from Iowa (Mr. CLARK), the distinguished Senator from Kansas (Mr. DOLE), and the distinguished Senator

from Kentucky (Mr. Cook), and other Senators who are interested in the matter of daylight saving time at this time of the year.

May I say I agree wholeheartedly with what the Senator from Iowa has just said, because what applies to the State of Iowa applies equally to the State of Montana.

The bill which we have introduced repeals daylight saving time. Fundamentally, daylight saving time demonstrated that—

First. This swiftly passed remedy to meet the problem of energy conservation has raised an even more significant crisis.

Second. The increased jeopardy to young schoolchildren in the predawn, predaylight hours of the weekday demonstrates the utter failure of year-round daylight saving time. Furthermore, if my memory of Mr. William Simon's testimony is correct, he stated that he doubted any energy was being saved. The distinguished Senator from Iowa states that perhaps 0.2 percent has been saved, but that certainly is not to be compared with the jeopardy in which the lives of youngsters have been placed.

It is asked: Why not change the school day to a later sun-up period? It cannot be done simply because households where there is only one parent or where both parents work would find infants and youngsters left completely alone and unattended—a situation potentially as bad as that which exists.

This bill would end daylight saving time year-round that was enacted to meet in part the energy crisis. It will be repealed upon its enactment. Schools across the land would then operate only during daylight hours.

If transportation companies need time to readjust their schedules, the Committee on Commerce should take note of that. However, nothing should delay enactment of this repealer, because, in addition to what we have noted in our own particular States, I must say I have been appalled by what Governor Askew said, to the effect that since daylight saving was inaugurated in that State on January 6, eight children have been killed, because of coming in contact with trailers, trucks, or automobiles.

So I would hope, along with my colleague, that the Commerce Committee would give this matter the most immediate and expeditious consideration.

I thank the distinguished Senator from Iowa.