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Study shows daylight saving time costs Hoosiers millions

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

The switch to daylight saving time is costing residential electricity users in Indiana \$8.6 million a year, according to a new study.

"The point of this study is just to shed light on the old myth that daylight saving time saves energy," said Matthew J. Kotchen, a University of California-Santa Barbara economics professor who conducted the study.

Kotchen said the energy-saving argument has been made since Benjamin Franklin raised the issue more than 200 years ago.

The study found electricity consumption -- when differences in weather and other factors were taken into consideration -- increased by up to 4 percent. The cost to individual households comes out to \$3.19 a year.

Kotchen said DST reduces lighting costs, but increases both air conditioning and heating costs too much to offset those savings.

Still, he said, the study should not be taken as the definitive assessment of DST.

"I would not draw any conclusions from this as to whether you should keep or get rid of daylight saving time," Kotchen said.

"The study looked only at residential electric bills and there could be other things that offset those added costs or make (DST) better or worse for the people of Indiana."

Gov. Mitch Daniels pushed for the change to DST, making the switch a key part of his 2004 campaign for governor.

"The reason the governor supported daylight saving time was about jobs and removing a handicap from Indiana's economy," said Jane Jankowski, the governor's spokeswoman.

Jankowski said Daniels never painted the change as being about energy consumption or savings to homeowners.

"It was about jobs, promoting economic development and getting Indiana in sync with the rest of the country," she said.

A November Indianapolis Star-WTHR (Channel 13) poll found Hoosiers about evenly split on the time change. Forty-three percent said Daniels' decision to move the state to daylight saving time has been bad for Indiana, while 44 percent think it's been good. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Angeline Protogere, spokeswoman for Duke Energy, the state's largest provider of electricity, called the study interesting but said it leaves many questions. She said Duke supported the change for economic development reasons.

"There are other ways to show the impact of DST," she said, "particularly from a business development perspective."

The 240,000 homes involved in the study represent about 35 percent of Duke Energy's more than 679,400 residential customers in Indiana, Protogere said. There were about 2.5 million residential power users in Indiana in 2000, according to Census data.

The \$8.6 million price tag was computed by projecting the added electrical use in the 240,000 homes involved in the study across all of Indiana's residential electricity users.

Kotchen said the idea for the research project grew out of a conversation with a Hoosier dinner guest in Santa Barbara and a subsequent chance meeting with a Duke Energy official.

As his Hoosier dining companion was talking about his flight to California and confusion regarding time changes, Kotchen said, "he began telling me the history of the time debate in Indiana and that the state had recently switched to daylight saving time."

At a conference a few months later, Kotchen said he met a Duke official and pitched his idea about getting access to Indiana data for the study.

Tom Andrews, Kokomo, said the added cost is just another reason to dislike the change to DST. He said he never thought the switch would save money.

"The added cost is minimal," he said. "For me, it's more of a light issue. It just knocks my body clock out of whack."

Like many other Hoosiers, Andrews said his biggest gripe with the change is that most of Indiana is on Eastern time.

"I'm not surprised by this," said Rep. David Crooks, D-Washington, who opposed the time switch and thinks most of the state should be on Central time with Chicago, not Eastern time with New York.

In the southwestern corner of the state where Crooks' district lies, Evansville and neighboring counties are on Central time, while Washington, Vincennes, Jasper and Huntingburg are on Eastern time. Crooks acknowledges that it's unlikely that any time zone arrangement will please a majority of people.

"If you wanted to be natural compared to the rest of the nation, Indiana should be Central. Because we were on Eastern for so long, it seems unnatural for Indiana to be on Central."

