

Debate continues on which time zone is right for Knox County

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VINCENNES — It's been three years since the state started observing daylight-saving time, a move made possible by then-State Rep. Troy Woodruff, a first-term Republican who cast the deciding vote in support of the legislation — and by doing so possibly ended his political career.

He was not elected to a second term.

The vote in Indianapolis started a debate in Knox County and elsewhere, including Dubois County.

"Initially, when the debate came up, we polled our mem-

bers," said Marc McNeece, president and CEO of the Knox County Chamber of Commerce. "Right down the line, almost, it was a three-way tie of leave it alone, go to Central, go to Eastern."

Originally, the county commissioners chose Central time, putting Vincennes on the same time as Evansville and Lawrenceville, Ill., but an hour behind Terre Haute and Indianapolis. Their reasoning was that the economic influence of Evansville meant having Knox and Vanderburgh counties on the same time would be beneficial.

But after a yesupporters of Eastern time prevailed on the commissioners to petition the U.S. De-

partment of Transportation to move the county to align with most of the other counties in the state. Several counties in southwest Indiana that made the switch to Central time returned to Eastern.

McNeece said there has been no obvious overarching benefit to being on Eastern time, with the exception of a few areas of the economy such as restaurants and medical care. Because many medical insurers are based in Indianapolis, McNeece said being on Eastern time makes it easier to conduct billing transactions.

Being on Eastern time instead of Central also allows some restaurants to reap the benefit of two regional lunch hours as workers from

Illinois, which is on Central time, come to Knox County an hour after local workers take lunch.

But the impact on the largest sector of the local economy, agriculture, remains nebulous.

Local farmer Ray McCormick thinks the entire state should be on Central time. The trouble for farmers like him is doubled during the spring and summer months when daylight-saving time is in effect and pushes things forward an hour, reducing early morning light.

"We're positioned for Central time where the sun crosses. My employees and I come to work at 7 in the morning and it's pitch dark and we can't see what we're do-

ing," he said. "When you're checking grain bins, starting dryers, setting timers, and all the equipment we have to work with . . . It's hard to do it in the dark."

McCormick is not alone in his feelings. A group of advocates who go by the name Hoosiers for Central Time wants to have Indiana's time adjusted to be more in line with its geography. Being on Eastern time, advocates say, means schoolchildren must get up before dawn and wait for school buses in the dark.

The group cites several incidents in which children have been kidnapped, assaulted or killed because they were hit by school buses before dawn.