

2800
United States Dept. of Transportation
Docket Management Facility (OST-2000-8013) - 44
400 Seventh Street SW, Room PL-401
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in regard to docket OST-200-8013, which is about changing Mercer County in North Dakota from Mountain Time to Central Time.

We are very much against this change for several reasons.

1. My husband currently works at one of the Power plants, which does run on central time. (The plant runs on Central time because the main office is located in Fergus Falls, MN). When he gets home he has an extra hour to do his shopping in town, to do farm work, or do activities with his 4 children. He currently works from 6:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Mountain Time or 7:00 to 5:30 Central Time. Also when he gets off work he still has 1 hour to do business in town. Which he won't be able to do if we would change to Central Time. The stores close at 5:30, and they have already stated that they will continue to close at 5:30 if we change to Central Time. We also farm, and if he would break down one evening and have to purchase parts the next day, he wouldn't be able to if we changed to Central Time, because by the time he got off work the stores would be closed. He would have to travel to a town, which is 28 miles away to purchase his parts. This town is in Morton County, which is still on Mountain Time. The stores in Beulah would loose a lot of business, and force us and many others to go to neighboring towns in other counties to purchase supplies and parts.

The businesses that I am referring to are, the lumberyard, hardware store, automotive supply stores, and implement dealers. This would in the long run hurt the community, with people traveling to other towns to buy their supplies. Our small town would loose business and possibly cause some businesses to close. There are many other stores that would also loose business. **What good would this do to our community?**

If we were to change to Central Time the businesses would have to change their hours so that the plant workers could do their business. They would have to be open until 6:30 to give the plant workers time to do their business. (Many of the stores have already stated that they will continue to close at 5:30. If they would not change their hours, many people would be forced to go out of town to do their business, and this would extremely hurt the community, not help it.

2. We have 3 children currently in the Beulah School system. A lot of people say they want to change for the school system because kids in sports have to miss so many hours when traveling to outside activities. These kids are aware that they are missing school, and have to make up the work before they leave for the activity. We were forced to become a Class A school 2 years ago, because the enrollment in our high school is above 325 students in grades 9-12. We currently have to play with other Class A schools, which are on Central Time. But in 3

years our enrollment will decrease and put us back in Class B. In Class B most of the schools that we will be competing against are also on Mountain Time. So by changing us to Central Time it would be a major problem in 3 years when we go back to a Class B school and play mostly schools that will remain in Mountain Time. Why try to fix the problem today, and make it more of a problem in 3 years? We will remain a Class B school until the town dies. If we change to Central Time it will not be a fix at all, it will only cause more problems especially in 3 years when we will play mainly schools in Mountain Time.

3. Another issue about the school system. School currently starts at 8:25 and gets out at 3:20. My children get up at 6:45, and get on the bus at 7:38. In the winter when I get my children up, it is still dark out, and gets light around 7:15. So they are getting on the bus just barely in the daylight. They get home at 3:45 and it is still light for another half hour or so. If we change to Central Time my children will be getting up in the dark, and standing out waiting for the bus in the dark, and getting to school still in the dark. They will have more daylight in the evening, but my concern is kids standing out in the dark waiting for a school bus. I feel this will cause drivers more concern with kids standing out in the dark, and could cause kids to get hit by cars or buses because it is dark to see. Why make the kids start school in the dark, when they do not have to. It is a fact that when it is dark it is harder to concentrate and to study. Why make the kids get up so early and start school in the dark. If we leave things the way they are the kids are not out in the dark either in the morning or evening. Another concern is why get the kids up an hour earlier to start school, kids need their rest if they are to do good in school. I also have one example, today 10-16-2000 it got light at 6:47 Mountain Time. If that were Central Time it wouldn't get light until 7:47, my kids get on the bus at 7:35, so it would still be dark when clocks they got on the bus if we were on Central Time. And this is just October which is the middle of the fall, what about the rest of winter. It will be much worse. Why put the kids on the bus in the dark most of the school year.
4. Another school issue that I want to talk that needs to be addressed. We are concerned with the high school kids missing school for various activities. What about the little kids when they get home from school. I am a stay at home Mom, but what about the families where both parents have to work. The plant where the employees get off at 3:00 M.T. and 3:30 M.T. employee a lot of people. These parents are home when there kids get home from school. If they had to work until 4 C.T. where would these children go. Many of them are too little to stay home alone, and there are not enough babysitters to go around for all these small children. It is very important for these parents to be home when their children get home from school. It is important for the children to come home to a parent and not an empty home. There are too many children in today's society who do not have enough time to spend with their parents. Why do we want even more children to come home to an empty house?

5. I have one last school issue. We live in North Dakota, and have North Dakota winters. That means that there are days in the winter where we get snow storms. Some nights we get blowing snow. After these days or nights the school system will start school on time and have the rural buses running 1 hour late. Starting 1 hour late give the snow plows a chance to get out after daylight and open up the highways and main roads. This way the buses have more open roads to travel on and less likely to run in the ditch or get stuck in a snow drift. If we were on Central Time, they would have to have the buses running 2 hours late, so that the highway department has time to clean the roads out in the daylight. What about the time these kids would miss in school. Isn't that important also. These children would have to get the assignment from other students and have it done by class time the next day. They would not have a chance to hear what the teacher said, or an explanation of the assignment. With kids in extracurricular activities, they get their assignment days in advance, and the teacher does have time to explain what they want. The teacher many times also gives them a photo copy of the notes she gave the class. The bus students who miss 2 hours of school because the buses had to run 2 hours late, and not 1 hour late, do not have this opportunity. What about these school kids, they will be missing more hours also?
5. If we go to Central Time I feel that there would be more people traveling to the bigger communities like Bismarck-Mandan, or Minot to do all of their shopping. They would travel to the bigger communities because they have longer hours for people to do their business. It would be more convenient for everyone to travel. This would greatly hurt our own small town businesses.
6. Yes, our newspapers and television are on Central Time, but we now get the paper at 6 A.M. not 7. And we can watch our Local News and weather at 9 P.M. and then go to bed. We don't have to stay up until after 10 to see it. The major airport is in Bismarck and some flights do leave early, but we are all used to adjusting ourselves, and most people who fly early, just go down the night before to stay in a motel. Even changing to Central Time, most people with early flight would travel to Bismarck the night before. They start their vacation early by staying in a motel. Why change the time just so people can sleep in an hour later to catch a flight. **Most of us in Mercer County like it as is**, and have no problem adjusting to reach our flights on time.
7. As farmers we work until dark. Now in the summer it gets dark at 10, then we can quite, go home, have dinner, and go to bed. If we go to Central Time it will be light until 11 who wants to work that late? But farmers work until dark, to get the crops in and off the fields. How would you like to work until 11 every night to do your job?
8. Mercer County has been on Mountain Time for over 70 years, we like it. We have adjusted to the time changes and have no problems with it. They did change to

Central Time back in the 70's. They tried it for a while, and it did not work. Why try it again when we know it didn't work then, so why try it again. There will be the same results.

8. One person said that people in the Beulah area commute to Bismarck-Mandan for employment, this is incorrect. People from **there** commute **to Beulah** for employment. These people also like it because they can sleep in an extra hour before getting in their vehicle to drive the 80 miles to work.
9. Many people do stay in town for doctors, dentist, and eye appointments. The businesses do complain that everyone wants the 3:00-5:00 appointments. Well by changing to Central Time this will only mean that many people who work at one of the 5 power plants will need later appointments. They will not get off work until 4:00 at one plant, 4:30 at 3 of the plants, or at the plant my husband works at they will not get off until 5:30. Most people will not use there vacation for dentist, doctor, or eye appointments. If these facilities remain open the same hours then these workers will need the after 4:30 appointments. The businesses will either have to stay open longer to suite the workers, or else loose the business to other towns. If these workers can't get the late appointments they will go to other towns to do their doctoring. This will hurt these medical facilities and maybe cause them to close. There are over 600 people employed at the various plants. That is a lot of business to loose, Don't you think.
10.

Our mail currently comes from Bismarck. And we don't get our mail until 12:00 M.T. or later. And around Christmas time it gets to be 3:00 or later. If we were to switch to Central Time we would not be getting our mail until 1:00 or later and later than ever during the Christmas season. This would be totally ridiculous. Does this sound like it would be an advantage to the community?
11. Another point that I want to make is the way this election was held. It was talked about in February about petitioning to change, and for some reason they did get a petition through. It was talked about in March and April and that was the end of it. They always post a sample ballot in the Beulah Beacon (which is our local paper). In this sample ballot they did not have the time change voting on. We had not heard about the time change vote for a month, and then not being on the sample ballot many people didn't think that we were voting on it now and not until the general election in November. My husband called and said it is on the ballot, so I did go in and vote. Many others didn't know that we were voting on this issue. Or felt that it was just to see if there was any interest at all, to see if it should be on the November ballot. There are currently about 10,000 people living in Mercer County, and less than 2,000 people voted, with 790 voting to change and 689 people voting to leave us on Mountain Time. **That is a majority?** Generally something on the primary election in June shows up again on the November ballot for a final vote. This is not the case with this situation.

There are also a lot of farmers in this community, and in June they were busy in the fields and did not have the time to shut down the tractor, go home, clean up, to go to town to vote. When farmers are busy in the fields that is their work, that is where they get their money to live on from. That is their job and income. Most of the farmers, and everyone else figured that they could vote in November on this issue. In November the farmers **do** have the time to run in to vote, because they are no longer in the fields. This issue should also be on the November ballot to get a good count of what the people want. **They do not plan on putting it on the November ballot. WHY**

Also my in-laws went in to vote. My father-in-law's ballot did not have the time zone vote on it, he had to go and get a new ballot. How many others were like this, *WHY DID THEY HAVE TWO DIFFERENT BALLOTS?* We feel that the County Commissioners are doing something sneaky, and illegal. They did not have a majority of the people voting for this issue. Like I stated many did not know that it was on the ballot, and they also had two different ballots that they were handing out.

14. I have one more issue, with the farmers here in Mercer County, and on Mountain Time. Here you can look at the sun and you can tell what time it is. You know when it is lunch time and so on. We are farther west than many places in Central Time. And the farther west you get the farther down the sun is, or hasn't risen to high noon yet, at 12:00. With Central Time we will not be able to tell the time by the sun. And this is important to farmers. Especially if they have cattle at home, that need to be fed or milked. You need to do this at the same time every day. A lot of farmers do not wear watches, because they can easily get tangled up in machinery causing them to get hurt and possible loose an arm. They depend on the sun to watch what time it is.

We feel that you should decline this petition and leave Mercer County on Mountain Time. It is the only decision.

You have to have the time change boundaries someplace, why change it. Central Time already is too big, and Mountain Time continues to get smaller.

Switching to Central Time would only hurt the community. Hurting businesses by causing people to go out of town to do their shopping.

Hurt doctors because they would close at 5 or 5:30, and most plant workers would not get off until 4:30 or some 5:30. All these people would need late appointments or go to other towns.

I have one more point to bring up. When we travel to Bismarck-Mandan we go through Mercer, Morton, and Burleigh counties. Well Burleigh is on Central Time and it is east of the Missouri River. Morton County is on Mountain Time. If we switched we would travel Central Time, Mountain Time, and back to Central Time. Wouldn't this be even

more confusing for people traveling to know what time it is? Everyone knows that if you are South and West of the Missouri River they are on Mountain Time and everyone North and East are on Central Time. If we start picking and choosing counties it will be even more confusing for everyone to know what time they are on..

Sincerely

Mr. + Mrs. Jean Hoepfner

Mr. And Mrs. Jean Hoepfner