

State to combine time zones Oct. 30

The Associated Press

JUNEAU — Almost all of Alaska will be under a common time zone after Oct. 30 when the nation switches back to standard time, Gov. Bill Sheffield said last week.

Elizabeth Dole, secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, approved a plan to reduce Alaska's four time zones to two, Sheffield said.

Under the plan, all of Alaska east of Unalaska will be on Yukon time, while the area west of Unalaska will move forward an hour to what is now Alaska time.

southeast Alaska will turn back its clock two hours on Oct. 30, while clocks in the populous railbelt area, which includes Anchorage, Fairbanks and the Kenai Peninsula, will stay where they are now.

Because the rest of the nation will be turning back the clock by an hour on Oct. 30 — to switch from daylight to standard time — the majority of Alaskans will be four instead of five hours from New York.

The change will have the effect of putting southeast Alaska one hour behind the West Coast, a fact that drew

change during hearings last month.

Initially, western Alaska communities including Nome and Kotzebue were not slated to move forward two hours to Yukon time. But Sheffield said those communities and villages around them asked to be on Yukon time, rather than simply move forward an hour to what is now Alaska time.

The time zone switch drew considerable support from business interests in the railbelt area, who said the time distance from the Lower 48 impeded commerce.

"We would view it as a very positive development for our industry in Alaska. In reality, it gives us an additional

hour" in which to conduct business with the New York Stock Exchange and other financial centers on the East Coast, said Harold Pierce, vice-president with Merrill Lynch in Anchorage.

The change will provoke some painful adjustments for some, Kent Sturgis, managing editor of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, said. It apparently will mean his evening paper will not be able to carry the complete closing stocks, a popular feature. "We're looking at the problem and trying to figure something out," he said.

Also in support of the change was the Alaska Committee, a Juneau-based group

that successfully fought efforts last year to move the capital from Juneau to Willow.

Anti-capital move forces contend a common clock between the railbelt and the capital would help defuse pro-move sentiment.

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