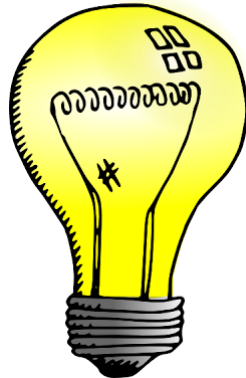


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By: Breck Norment, Staff Member

A law passed four years ago will soon make an impact on American consumers.[1] The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 will begin prohibiting the manufacture of higher wattage light bulbs on January 1, 2012.[2] The Act first requires manufacturers to replace 100 watt

incandescent bulbs with a maximum of 72 watt bulbs.[3] Although the Act does not eliminate the manufacture of incandescent bulbs, it does “require bulbs to be 25 to 30 percent more efficient by 2014, and at least 60 percent more efficient by 2020, effectively eliminating the most popular bulbs.”[4] The bill passed in the house with 95 Republican votes and was signed into law by President George W. Bush.[5]

After an apparent change of heart, House Republicans failed in their attempts to repeal the law in July 2011.[6] Republican Presidential candidate Michelle Bachmann has advocated for repealing the light bulb requirements in her campaign.[7] She stated that if she were elected President, Americans would be able to buy any type of light bulb.[8]

While light bulbs may seem like a trifling issue on the surface, consumers have strong opinions and it has already made waves in the political landscape.[9] Consumers often complain that energy efficient bulbs are not bright enough and are too expensive.[10] Many consumers have even begun to stock up on old incandescent bulbs.[11]

When evaluating the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, we must compare the effect of the law on our environment with its effects on the American consumer. In one respect, the energy efficient bulbs use considerably less energy and last much longer than traditional high wattage incandescent bulbs. One energy efficient option called a compact fluorescent bulb (CFL), however, contains mercury and requires recycling.[12] Careless disposal could take a toll on the environment.

There are both benefits and drawbacks for consumers as a result of the law. They benefit from a lower electricity bill at the end of each month, but they pay more for each bulb on the front end. CFLs cost approximately three dollars and LEDs can cost up to 40 dollars.[13] Meanwhile, traditional incandescent bulbs cost around 40 cents.[14] While the energy efficient bulbs are supposed to last longer than an incandescent bulb, consumers can lose money quickly if those expensive bulbs are blown.

The effects of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 may upset consumers, but it is an inevitable step our nation must take. Eventually, manufacturers will come up with cheaper production methods and more reliable energy efficient bulbs. Like them or not, energy efficient bulbs are probably here to stay, and our nation will reap the benefits in future years.

[1] The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-140.

[2] *Id.*

[3] *Id.*

[4] Jennifer Palmer, *Not All Consumers Think Light Bulb Law is a Bright Idea*, NewsOK (September 20, 2011), <http://newsok.com/not-all-consumers-think-light-bulb-law-is-a-bright-idea/article/3605736> (<http://newsok.com/not-all-consumers-think-light-bulb-law-is-a-bright-idea/article/3605736>)

[5] Margaret Carlson, *Light Bulb Saga Illuminates New Republicans*, Bloomberg Businessweek (Sept. 20, 2011, 8:27 PM), <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-09-20/light-bulb-saga-illuminates-new-republicans-margaret-carlson.html> (<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-09-20/light-bulb-saga-illuminates-new-republicans-margaret-carlson.html>)

[6] *See* Palmer, *supra* note 4.

[7] *See* Carlson, *supra* note 5.

[8] *Id.*

[9] *Id.*

[10] *See* Palmer, *supra* note 4.

[11] *Id.*

[12] *Id.*

[13] *Id.*

[14] *Id.*

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