



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 12, 2011

## House to Vote on Bill that Overturns Light Bulb Ban

The U.S. House of Representatives is pushing legislation that would overturn a law that bans incandescent light bulbs and sets new energy-efficiency standards for the bulbs. Under President George W. Bush, a 2007 energy act was passed that requires efficiency upgrades in incandescent light bulbs, which have remained relatively unchanged since the invention of the light bulb in 1879. Republicans in the House contend that the law is a violation of personal freedom and are determined to overturn it. A vote on a bill to overturn the ban could come as early as today.



*The Blaze* [reports](#):

Republicans say the new standards, signed into law by President George W. Bush, are a symbol of an overreaching federal government and people should have the right to buy the traditional, cheap and reliable incandescent bulbs. The Obama administration and environmentalists say new bulbs on the market will save American households billions of dollars in energy costs.

Representative Joe Barton (R-Texas) introduced the legislation, the Better Use of Light Bulbs Act ([BULB](#)), on July 6 to overturn the 2007 ban. The act repeals Subtitle B of Title III of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, wherein the ban of the incandescent light bulbs is found.

Barton asserts that the ban is yet another example of government overreach:

The unanticipated consequence of the '07 act — Washington-mandated layoffs in the middle of a desperate recession — is one of many examples of what happens when politicians and activists think they know better than consumers and workers. From the health insurance you're allowed to have, to the car you can drive, to the light bulbs you can buy, Washington is making too many decisions that are better left to people who work for their own paychecks and earn their own living.

This [ban] is indicative of the overreach that the Obama administration, Mrs. Pelosi, and Majority Leader Reid, have put on the American people. They're mandating our behavior in healthcare, they're mandating, in this case, in energy. They don't want the American people to have choice and they basically don't trust the public. They want to tell the country what's best for them to do.

Representative Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.) echoed similar sentiments, stating,

If the American people needed another example of why it is time to roll back the hyper-regulation of the past four years, this is it." She went on, "Washington banned a perfectly good product and fired hard working Americans based on little more than their own whim and the silly notion that they know better than the American consumer. Now, hundreds more Americans are looking for work while assembly lines in China are churning out fluorescent bulbs for the US market. Tell me how that makes any sense at all.



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Bemoaning the 2007 Energy Act's preference for the compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs), Rep. Barton defends the incandescent light bulb as cheaper and more environmentally correct. Likewise, he contends, "The American consumer should be able to make the choice."

Additionally, Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas) observed,

... I have stated all along that exposing our citizens to the harmful effects of the mercury contained in CFL light bulbs, which are being manufactured in China, is likely to pose a hazard for years to come. This light bulb issue is just the latest example of Republicans attempting to correct the mistakes of Nancy Pelosi's misguided Democrat-controlled Congress.

Burgess also notes the loss of jobs as a result of the 2007 bill: "Thousands of American jobs have been shipped overseas as a direct consequence of this light bulb provision in the Democrats' 2007 energy bill."

The BULB Act is currently being considered under a procedure that requires a two-thirds majority to pass, which may prove to be difficult, as Democrats on the Energy and Commerce Committee are urging their fellow party members to oppose the bill.

*The Blaze* provides some background for Barton's efforts:

The light bulb became an issue after the Republican takeover of the House, when Barton was vying with Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., for the energy panel chairmanship. Upton, who worked with Democrats in crafting the light bulb provisions in the 2007 energy act, eventually got the job, but Barton got his bill on the legislative calendar.

Supporters of the 2007 Energy Act claim the incandescent light bulb ban will save American families approximately 7 percent a year in energy costs, and assert that the alternatives to the incandescent light bulb are more environmentally friendly.

However, as [noted](#) by *The New American's* Daniel Sayani, these advocates are ignoring the many serious problems associated with some of the [alternatives](#), particularly the CFLs:

CFLs have powerful radiation-emitting electromagnetic fields which expose people to "dirty electricity," which can lead to a fivefold increase in cancer; furthermore, because they are composed of mercury vapor, broken CFLs can be deadly, as users are exposed to possible mercury poisoning. In addition, the bulbs have been linked to severe neurological damage, as they can result in migraine and epilepsy attacks.

Likewise, the *Wall Street Journal* indicates that the longevity of the bulbs has been exaggerated by 30 percent.

The organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs), another new lighting technology, have had problems with mass production. *The Blaze* writes:

OLEDs are glowing sheets or tiles, rather than pinprick light sources, as LEDs are. They're used as vibrant color screens for smartphones, particularly from Samsung Electronics Co.

But making OLEDs that are big, bright, cheap and long-lasting enough for use as light sources has proved difficult, in part because they use chemicals that are sensitive to oxygen and spoil unless sealed very carefully.

The LEDs have proven to be durable, efficient, and easily mass-produced, but are absurdly expensive, approximately \$40.



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Under the BULB Act, no state or local energy efficiency regulation can be imposed if the requirement is only able to be met by installing bulbs or lamps that contain mercury.

If the incandescent light bulb ban remains in effect, 100-watt light bulbs will no longer be available at most stores by January 1, 2012. The same applies to the 75-watt bulb in 2013 and traditional 40- and 60-watt bulbs in 2014.



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