

Opinion: Dim government thinking creates silly law

By Ted Gaines

As we say hello to 2012, it is time to say goodbye to an old friend, the trusty and dependable 100-watt light bulb. It will disappear into the new, uncomfortably-bright white world of the compact fluorescent light (CFL), where green Utopianism is killing consumer choice, shipping jobs to China, and lowering the dimmer switch on freedom.

The government's benevolent, freedom-loving message to the people regarding CFLs is this: You can use any bulb you like, as long as it's fluorescent. That's because CFLs are the chief replacement for the traditional incandescent light bulbs that the federal government will effectively ban in stages starting Jan. 1, 2012.



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The problem with that Hobson's choice is that people already have real choices when it comes to bulbs for their homes and they don't need the wisdom of bureaucrats to light the way for them.

Many are getting by with the same inefficient, global-warming villain known as the incandescent bulb that has only survived more than a century without significant change. Among things it does that CFLs do not do is glow with a light people

actually enjoy and does not give them headaches. Who would want that when the government says otherwise?

It also doesn't spill Mercury – a poison – onto the linoleum when it breaks, requiring a scary list of EPA clean-up instructions that include emptying the room of people and pets, airing out the room for 10 minutes and turning off any central heating and air systems. And it's cheap.

The CFL has its advantages over the traditional bulb. Energy efficiency is the CFL's calling card. It uses a fraction of the incandescent's energy. It lasts longer.

The government, though, isn't weighing the benefits of one against the other, like consumers in a free society do day after day with product after product from candy bars to cars. No – it has made up consumers' minds for them and put the fear of global warming above everything else.

What do consumers want? When standing in the light bulb aisle, with the bulbs sitting right next to each other on the shelves, they ignore the dictates of the green *bien pensants* and overwhelmingly choose incandescent bulbs.

Apparently, they are suffering from a collective delusion about what product is better.

The ban has all the hallmarks of bad government. It's a nannyish, meddling, superior regulation that will force people to buy a product they don't want for more money.

The green jobs that were supposed to be one of the many blessings of the forced transition were not a myth, however. They appeared – in China. Apparently, labor-intensive CFL manufacturing doesn't pencil out in America.

As we say goodbye to the signature invention of American's greatest inventor, let's remember that we won't lose our freedom all at once, but one light bulb at a time.

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