Spending bill temporarily averts incandescent ban

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The omnibus spending bill [1] passed Thursday includes a provision that temporarily lifts the incandescent light bulb ban. Republicans managed to insert language into the 1,200 page bill that prevents funds from being used to implement the first phase of the ban, which was scheduled to commence on January 1st. The incandescent light bulb will be given a stay of execution through at least September 30, 2012.

For those who didn't know…in 2007, President Bush signed the Energy Independence and Security Act [2] into law. Subtitle B of Title III mandated an approximate 30% increase in energy efficiency for lightbulbs. Beginning in 2012 with the 100 W bulb and continuing through 2014, this legislation would have forcibly removed incandescents from the marketplace.

Opponents of the bill dubbed it an “incandescent ban” and rightfully so. While the Energy Independence Act of 2007 doesn’t specifically refer to a ban, the riders set forth energy efficiency standards that incandescent bulbs couldn’t possibly attain (not most of them, anyway).

The Senate’s own summary [3] was unequivocally clear on the bill’s intent:

“The first part of the new energy efficiency standard would increase energy efficiency standards of light bulbs by 30 percent and effectively phase out most common types of incandescent light bulbs by 2012-2014.”

I support advanced illumination technologies – especially solid state lighting, which (no pun intended) will light the future. But I don’t believe in the forced obsolescence of older technologies. Let consumers decide.

To reiterate, the provision to the spending bill doesn’t repeal the incandescent ban entirely nor does it sever the relevant portion of the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act.

The "Better Use of Light Bulbs Act [4]" (defeated in the House) would have completely overturned the ban. But it was not to be.

Instead, the new clause prevents money from being put towards implementation of the incandescent ban. And this stay of execution is only good through September 30.

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