ANOTHER BRIGHT IDEA

Lawmakers take up battle against light bulb ban

'Government has substituted its choice for the American consumer's'

U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., and 24 other representatives on Capitol Hill have asked the government to reconsider mandating that all Americans use exclusively compact fluorescent bulbs, or CFLs, in light of growing concerns over the safety and environmental impact of the bulbs.

As WND reported, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 was signed into law in December, phasing out the use of traditional, incandescent light bulbs in favor of CFLs beginning in 2012 and culminating in a ban on incandescent bulbs in 2014.

"Most Americans, if you ask them, have no idea that the government has already made a choice for them," Bachmann said in a televised MSNBC interview. "The government has substituted its choice for the American consumer's choice. Most Americans have no idea they won't be able to choose their own light bulbs."

Now, concerns about mercury in the bulbs and mercury vapor released when a CFL is broken have led Bachmann and a group of legislators in the House to second-guess the government's choice.

"Each light bulb contains between 3-6 milligrams of mercury," Bachmann said. "There's a question about how that mercury will fill up our landfills, and also if you break one in your home, you'll have mercury that instantaneously vaporizes in your home. That poses a very real threat to children, disabled people, pets, senior citizens. And I just think it's very important that Americans have the choice to decide, would they like an incandescent or a (CFL)?"

(Story continues below)
Bachmann introduced the bill in March because, she said, she thought Congress had "acted a bit prematurely" in taking a popular environmentalist cause and making it a government dictate.

"I just don't think it's a good idea for Congress to jump on board fads every time a fad comes along," she said. "I think we can trust the intelligence of the American consumer to make the choice that they'd like to make."

Following the introduction of H.R. 5616, the bill was sent to the House Energy and Commerce Committee and then sent to the Subcommittee on Energy & Air Quality, where it has languished without action or a hearing for five months.

"I have nothing against those light bulbs," Bachmann said. "But I think the American public should have the right to choose which light bulb they'd like to purchase because there are some real environmental concerns with the [CFL]."

"It really isn't an example where you have to choose between the environment and personal choice. You can have both," she said.

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