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## **\$50 Light Bulb Wins Government Prize for Green Affordability**

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**April 10, 2012**

What constitutes an affordable “green” light bulb? According to the U.S. Department of Energy, \$50 per light bulb is our most promising future.

### **No Likely Market**

The Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded a \$10 million prize to Philips, a Dutch electronics company that is one of the leading manufacturers of light bulbs sold in the United States, for winning the “L Prize” for designing an affordable, energy-efficient light bulb “to replace the common light bulb.”

Philips’s winning entry, which appears to be the only entry, was a light bulb that costs \$50 apiece. By comparison, standard incandescent bulbs retail for approximately \$1 per bulb. Retailers maintain the new bulb is too pricey to have broad market appeal, especially since similar LED bulbs are already available at less than half the cost.

### **Affordable Bulbs Banned**

The origin of Philip’s \$50 green light bulb goes back to 2007 when President George W. Bush signed energy legislation that effectively banned incandescent light bulbs by 2014. Starting this year, the law covers traditional 100-watt bulbs. Sales of traditional 75-watt incandescents will be prohibited next year, with 60-watt incandescents banned in the following year.

### **Reward for Stifling Competition**

Sam Kazman, general counsel for the Competitive Enterprise Institute, joins other analysts in characterizing the law as an unfair burden on consumers and a bold example of government interfering with consumer choice. He says the government’s \$50 “affordable” green light bulb represents the height of nonsense.

Consider these facts, says Kazman:

“(1) A \$50 bulb gets a government award for affordable innovation. (2) Philips pockets the \$10 million prize money as encouragement for serving a market created by the very light bulb ban for which Philips lobbied. (3) The administration touts non-incandescent technologies as being so good that they have to be forcibly imposed on consumers.

“When was the last time that we’ve been presented with such an array of political idiocies?” he asks.

## **New Health Risks**

H. Sterling Burnett, a senior fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis agrees, saying only the government could set up a program to develop an inexpensive green light bulb and then give a \$10 million prize to a company that develops a light bulb costing \$50 apiece.

“It’s absolutely ridiculous and shameful,” said Burnett.

“Environmental activists decry putting mercury into the environment, whether it’s from smokestacks at coal-fired power plants or in thermometers and thermostats. Ironically, these are the same people that want us to put mercury-containing CFL’s in our homes,” said Burnett.

Another problem with CFL’s is they are very fragile and can easily break.

“I’ve dropped traditional light bulbs before, and the glass is thin and fragile and it makes a mess when they hit the floor and it goes everywhere. Now imagine dropping a mercury-containing CFL. The EPA’s own Website says if you break one in your home, you need to shut off your air conditioner or heater and vent the room for 15 to 30 minutes before you even begin cleaning. This can be a problem if you live in Texas and its summer or Minnesota and its winter,” said Burnett.

“The list of required cleanup precautions is quite extensive.... In short, if you break a CFL in your living room, you’ve turned it into a short-term Superfund site,” says Burnett.

## **Rising Energy Costs**

Seton Motley, president of Less Government and editor-in-chief of StopNetRegulation.org, says the Obama administration’s \$50 affordable green light bulb is symptomatic of a president that thinks nothing of interfering with every aspect of the economy, including something as utilitarian as light bulbs.

“By the Obama administration’s standards, \$50 is an affordable, award-winning light bulb. This is the administration that makes everything more expensive, including gasoline. Remember when he said, ‘Under my administration, energy prices will necessarily skyrocket.’ And gasoline prices have more than doubled during his tenure,” Motley said.

“So congratulations to the Obama administration for giving the 'Affordability' award to a product that truly represents their cost-affecting ways—the \$50 light bulb,” says Motley.