

Obama on Light Bulbs¹

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ABC News' David Wright Reports: How many voters does it take to change a light bulb?

Democratic Presidential hopeful Barack Obama today sought to spark a debate that he hopes will generate more light than heat: phase out the old-fashioned incandescent light bulb by 2014.

The idea comes as part of Obama's [comprehensive energy strategy](#) unveiled today in New Hampshire. It's a dossier that would do Al Gore proud -- thick with proposals that he says would cut greenhouse emissions by the carbon load. The light bulb measure alone, Obama insists, would save American consumers \$6 billion a year on their electric bills and would save some 88 billion kilowatt hours of electricity per year.

By 2030, the campaign says, eliminating old fashioned light bulbs would cut greenhouse gases by nearly 28 million tons of carbon. That's the equivalent of 80 coal-fired power plants. The light bulb idea is actually catching on around the world. Brazil and Venezuela were the first to adopt such a measure in 2005. Australia and California followed suit, as have several Canadian provinces.

In an interview with the Financial Times newspaper, former President Bill Clinton recently supported efforts in Congress to do the same.

Obama's main rival for the Democratic nomination, frontrunner Hillary Clinton, has also advocated greater attention to the light bulb issue -- and not just because of the greenhouse gases they emit. "I am a huge advocate of improving the light cast by fluorescent bulbs," she said. "The problem is-- Every woman in this audience knows what it's like to try on a bathing suit in a dressing room with a fluorescent light. And there will not be broad-based market acceptance until we get a better glow from the fluorescent lights! So please get to work on that as soon as possible!"

The European Union recently proposed an outright ban on incandescent light bulbs, apparently without consulting business or consumer groups. That proposed ban has not yet been approved by EU member states."

A recent ABC News poll found that 7 out of 10 Americans say they use at least some higher-efficiency Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs in their homes. But support for legislative efforts to mandate a switch-over break down along party lines: 65 percent of Democrats favor such a change, but only 41 percent of Republicans.

Surprisingly, GE supports the idea. "It's good for the environment," said spokeswoman Kim Freeman. "We're behind it, so long as we're talking about creating higher energy

¹ Source: <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalradar/2007/10/obama-on-light-.html>.

standards for light bulbs, and not outright bans on incandescent technology.” “We have nothing against incandescent bulbs per se,” said Obama campaign advisor Jason Grumet, executive director of the National Commission on Energy Policy. “But,” he said, “we have to come up with something that’s more efficient.”

Opposition would likely come from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, whose national web page celebrates the 125 anniversary of Thomas Edison’s invention.

But union officials could not be reached for comment. IBEW’s national headquarters is closed, in observance of Columbus Day.

The reason IBEW opposes the phasing out of incandescent bulbs? Union jobs. Incandescent bulbs tend to be made in America, while most of those high tech, energy efficient light bulbs are made overseas. “The light bulb is the paradigm of how we blew it,” said Obama advisor Grumet. “America invented the light bulb, but ended up providing good jobs to someone else.”

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