The House of Representatives Vote on Lighting Efficiency

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UPDATE: The bill, which needed 2/3 to pass, failed.

UPDATE: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues statement, opposes H. R. 2417.

As early as Monday, the full House of Representatives is poised to consider H. R. 2417, the "Better Use of Light Bulbs (BULB) Act," which seeks to roll back energy efficiency standards for light bulbs. The bill, which was introduced by Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX), seeks to repeal standards that became law in 2007 as part of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) while preempting states from setting lighting efficiency standards.This bill, which due to procedural requirements needs two-thirds support in the House to advance, has been universally panned by consumer groups, advocacy organizations, and industry for a number of reasons.

First, a repeal of this kind would increase energy use. In testimony to Congress earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) went on record opposing such legislation and noted that eliminating these standards would increase energy consumption by 21 quads over the next 30 years. The U.S. uses about 100 quads of energy in a year, so this needless increase would be a staggering waste of money and increase in air pollution and its associated impacts, like childhood asthma. Such a move seems especially unwise considering that energy supplies are volatile enough to have warranted the release of 30 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve last month.

Second, the bill would cost consumers more money. According to analysis from the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE), utilizing these new lighting standards would save individual consumers annually over $85 a year, or over $12.5 billion nationwide. Raising cost to consumers would come at a time when the unemployment rate is still hovering at 9 percent.

Third, it would negate the investment in efficiency that industry has already made, therefore putting them at a competitive disadvantage to foreign manufacturing. Sylvania, for instance, has made significant investments to upgrade a facility in Pennsylvania to make new efficient lighting. Cree, a LED lighting company, has grown from a small group of engineers to about 5,000 employees to meet growing demand for their products.

A bill that would increase energy use, add costs to consumers, and threaten American competiveness sounds like an idea that Congress should reject.

View the bill »

Bryan Howard
Legislative Director

USGBC staff

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