

OPINION

Don't Turn Out Lights on Bulb Innovation

House vote undermines leadership in technology

BY KATHLEEN ROGERS

In a close vote, the House recently passed a provision that undercuts one of the most successful environmental programs of the decade -- one that requires all bulbs -- including the incandescent -- to achieve higher efficiency levels.

The amendment, which was tacked on to the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2012, delays a ban on sales of incandescent bulbs for nine months -- from Jan. 1 until the end of the fiscal year, Sept. 30, 2012 -- turning off the lights on this successful program.

The legislation, if passed by the Senate, will repeal one of those success stories that seems near impossible these days -- legislation that was drafted with the help of light-bulb manufacturing giants, Philips, General Electric and Sylvania, and

with the support of a coalition of efficiency and environmental organizations, including my own -- passed by a bipartisan majority of the House and Senate and was signed into law in 2007 by Republican President George W. Bush.

More unusual was the fact that California and Nevada, then under leadership of Republican governors, swallowed hard and gave up their own state lighting-efficiency legislation, which had faster time-

tables. They did so because they were persuaded by all of us that creating a single regulatory light-bulb standard for the whole country would support innovation; would help the United States maintain its market share of production; save American households money; create new jobs; and would give industry what it craves much more than the anti-regulatory crowd would have you believe.

It seems fair to use the term "dim bulb" to describe those members of Congress who voted to turn back the clock. It's up to the Senate to rectify this wrong.

Thomas Edison created the light bulb in 1879, one of the great U.S. inventions that helped solidify America's reputation as a global innovator and a place where innovation would be rewarded.

His incandescent bulb, though it revolutionized the world, spends most of its life making heat, not light, and it's remarkable for its inefficiency by today's standards. After a slow start, and in the face of a global phase-out, manufacturers began the arduous, expensive and sometimes exciting process of reinventing lighting.

Now, despite their detractors, the new generations of light bulbs, including the new highly efficient incandescent, is revolutionizing indoor, outdoor, and street lighting. And these new or improved bulbs will save American families \$100 to \$200 every year, for a total savings of \$12 billion for American households every year. It also will save more than 2,000 American jobs, including those in high-rate unemployment areas such as Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The survival of the legislation also means we won't be putting 1

million tons of climate pollution in our atmosphere, which is the equivalent of taking 17 million cars off the road, saving our country money, energy and lives.

Certainly, Thomas Edison would have embraced this technology for its energy and cost savings, as he often said, "Waste is worse than loss."

This legislation is simply one of many dozens of efforts that Congress is seriously entertaining that would roll back progress and stifle innovation.

From dissolution of the Environmental Protection Agency to stalling air-quality rules that would reduce mercury in the air, to blocking EPA from regulating climate pollutants, to even more subtle and damaging efforts -- congressional leadership is capitulating to Tea Partiers and others who myopically and tragically see regulation as an impediment to their version of a happy and prosperous life -- a life that seems to include wastefulness.

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innovation. From dissolution of EPA to stalling air-quality rules that would reduce mercury in the air, to blocking EPA from regulating climate pollutants, to even more subtle and damaging efforts -- congressional leadership is capitulating to Tea Partiers and others who myopically and tragically see regulation as an impediment to their version of a happy and prosperous life -- a life that seems to include wastefulness. Then to get us there, they have filtered out the long history of bipartisanship on energy solutions and environmental protection. Have they forgotten that Republican President Ronald Reagan pushed and pushed hard for energy efficiency standards and energy innovations?

There is one piece of ancient technology that American voters should insist on keeping -- a good old-fashioned broom. And we should use it to sweep out those members of Congress whose dedication against all regulations and support for unfettered individual freedom is undermining America's global leadership in technology and innovation, maybe permanently.

Kathleen Rogers is president of Earth Day Network.

Countering the Deadly Violence against Police

It in our best interests to keep officers safe

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

A report released by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, a group that works to promote law enforcement safety, indicates violence against police is at an all-time high, even though overall violent crimes have significantly declined.

According to the report, fatal police shootings reached a 20-year high in the first half of 2011; 40 officers were killed by gunfire. More than 25-percent of those fatal shootings occurred in January, when 11 officers from around the country were killed.

In one deadly 24-hour period in January, 11 officers nationwide were shot; three of them died. If the fatal shootings continue at this rate, shootings will be, for the first time, responsible for the majority of officer deaths.

Looking at these numbers, it would seem that it is open season on law-enforcement officers. Col-

lectively, we have to work together to stop police shootings.

Over the years, we've seen a significant number of African-Americans around the country join their law enforcement office, diversifying the force and reducing some of the historical racial tensions between the department and the community.

Those law enforcement and community bonds must be further strengthened; police and residents must work together to police neighborhoods. Community policing can help stop crime before it occurs and will lessen the chance that, say, a simple robbery escalate into a po-

lice shooting.

Schools, churches and community centers must also pool their resources to develop after school and summer programs that serve at-risk youth and unemployed men and women. The more activities a person is involved in and the more community support they have, the less opportunity they have to commit crime off the streets.

Finally, local governments have to work to reduce gun availability. Whether through buyback programs, reward programs for anonymous tips or some other method, getting illegal guns off the streets has to remain a priority. Doing so will reduce deaths among community members and officers.

In the past, there has been friction between residents and law enforcement, particularly in African-American communities. Harassment by police and racial profiling has led many of us to distrust the officers who are there to protect and serve.

This friction, combined with the societal ills - poverty, drug addiction and fatalistic attitudes, among them -- so many of our people face, can lead to crime and, sometimes, violent encounters with the police.

However, when an officer is attacked or, God forbid, shot, the offender isn't the only one who suffers. The entire community goes on lock down, with increased police presence; the officers are now on edge and the tension only rises. It's in all of our best interests to work to ensure officers are kept safe.

Greg Mathis is a former Michigan District Court judge and current syndicated television show judge.



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