



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rep. Kessler: Make Wisconsin's Lightbulbs "Green"
Legislation to promote the use of more energy efficient light bulbs

MADISON – State Representative Frederick P. Kessler (D-Milwaukee) is preparing to introduce a pair of bills that would promote the use of more energy efficient lightbulbs in Wisconsin by creating a lightbulb efficiency standard and limiting the amount of mercury that a lightbulb may contain.

The first piece of legislation is similar to the lumens-per-watt lighting efficiency standards that recently passed the U.S. Senate as part of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. However, while the standards outlined in the federal legislation do not take effect until 2012, Representative Kessler's proposal would make the lighting standards effective in Wisconsin beginning in 2010.

"An efficiency standard will motivate the businesses and families of Wisconsin to make the change from inefficient, traditional incandescent lightbulbs which waste both energy and money toward new, 'greener' lightbulbs," Representative Kessler said.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, alternatives to incandescent lightbulbs, such as compact fluorescent lightbulbs, last ten times longer and are 75% more efficient than traditional lightbulbs. It is estimated that about twenty percent of electricity costs for the average U.S. home come from lighting alone. If every home in America replaced one incandescent lightbulb with a compact fluorescent lightbulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, more than \$600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases that would be equal to the emissions of over 800,000 cars.

Compact fluorescent bulbs do, however, have one downside. They contain trace amounts of mercury. On average, fluorescents contain only 4-5 milligrams of mercury, which is equivalent to the amount that would be needed to cover the tip of a ball-point pen. Also, changing from incandescent lightbulbs to fluorescents will still result in a net reduction of the amount of mercury emitted, because the operation and disposal of one fluorescent bulb releases less mercury than the amount emitted by a power plant as it generates the electricity necessary to light an incandescent bulb.

Nevertheless, Representative Kessler is introducing a second bill to address the issue of mercury content. First, the proposal will limit the amount of mercury that a lightbulb may contain to 5 milligrams to ensure that foreign companies do not sell cheaply made, environmentally harmful compact fluorescent bulbs that are high in mercury in Wisconsin. The bill will also make it illegal to dispose of lightbulbs containing mercury in a landfill. Instead, these bulbs must be properly recycled.

Compact fluorescent lightbulbs are not the only alternative to incandescent bulbs. Other options include light emitting diodes, otherwise known as LED lights. LEDs currently cost more than compact fluorescent bulbs, but the technology is relatively new. It is believed that prices of LEDs will drop as the technology becomes more common. In addition, LEDs provide an appealing substitute because they do not contain mercury.

"This legislation is important because it protects our environment as well as our wallets. We are all paying the high costs of energy. The time has come to reassess the way things are done and look for new ways to save," Representative Kessler added.

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