

'Affordable' energy efficiency at \$50 a bulb

LIGHT BULBS FROM AI

energy-efficient incandescent, compact fluorescent and LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs, in a hasty transition that has upset some conservatives to characterize the law as an "island of freedom," as Rep. Michelle Lujan (R-Minn.) put it.

The L Prize was meant to ease the transition by enticing manufacturers to create affordable bulbs to replace the most common 60-watt incandescent bulb.

Philips spokesman declined to comment in detail about the bulb or its price because the product has not yet been formally launched. It is expected to hit stores within a few weeks and is available online. But the spokesman said the L Prize bulb costs more because, as the law requires, it is even more energy-efficient, running on 10 watts instead of 60 watts. It is brighter, renders colors better and lasts longer.

Originally, the contest set price goals. According to the L Prize guidelines, manufacturers were strongly encouraged to offer bulbs at prices that prove cost-effective and attractive to buyers, therefore more successful in the market. The target retail price, including rebates from utilities, was to be \$22 in the first year, \$12 in the second year and \$8 in the third year.

Energy Department officials awarded the award, saying they expected the cost of the L Prize bulb to drop over time. "The L Prize competition played a critical role in driving manufacturing and engineering innovations in the lighting industry and helping make the next generation of energy-saving LED lighting options more affordable for consumers," said department spokesman Niketa Kumar.

Officials added that they are working with utilities to provide rebates for consumers. That could reduce the price of the L Prize bulbs. Existing rebates, which max out around \$10, are too small to take a big slice out of the \$50 price tag. By comparison, the typical 60-watt bulb that it would replace costs as little as \$1.

Meet the L-Prize winner

This Philips bulb won the Department of Energy contest that sought an affordable, energy-saving alternative to a 60-watt incandescent. The bulb is indisputably energy-efficient but costs \$50.

TECHNOLOGY

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) produce light with electrons, which shed light waves as they travel across a semi-conducting chip. LED bulbs produce less heat than incandescents and don't contain hazardous mercury as fluorescents do.

ENERGY USAGE

The bulb uses 10 watts to produce as much or more light than a 60-watt incandescent bulb, or one-sixth the energy.

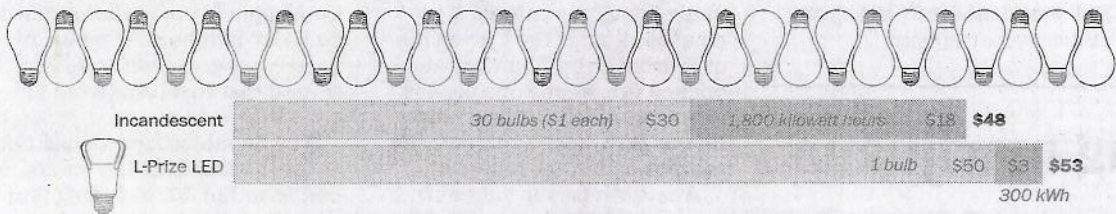
ASSEMBLY VS. MANUFACTURE

The contest originally required the winner to be made in the United States, but rules were relaxed to require U.S. assembly only. Philips says the chips are made in California and the bulbs are assembled in Wisconsin.

COST

The lifespan of the L-Prize bulb and the electricity it uses mitigate the initial cost. In addition, power companies including Pepco and Dominion Power are considering rebates for customers who buy LED bulbs.

TEN YEARS OF BULBS



Sources: Department of Energy, Philips Corp., Pepco, HowStuffWorks.com

PATTERSON CLARK AND BONNIE BERKOWITZ/THE WASHINGTON POST

bulbs. Many retailers said they were reluctant to speak on the record for fear of endangering their relationship with Philips, a major supplier.

Two other manufacturers, General Electric and Lighting Science Group, announced last year that they were developing entrants to the competition. But before they could submit, the prize was awarded and the competition

The Philips bulb will be assembled in Wisconsin, and the chips will be made at a Philips plant in San Jose, the company said.

In many ways, however, the L Prize may have been irrelevant. According to retailers, consumers are already embracing LEDs, which were the focus of the prize, and CFLs, or compact fluorescent lights, faster than many in the industry expected. The new bulbs

said. And he predicted that the percentage of LED bulbs sold would rise from 5 percent to 35 percent over the next three years.

In part, that's because manufacturers are offering LED bulbs for far less than the L Prize bulb.

For example, at Home Depot, one can find LED bulbs for much less than \$50. Lighting Science Group, under the EcoSmart label, offers another for \$23.97. It is as-

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