

And the government would have banned Thomas Edison's light bulb. Oh yeah, Obama's regulators actually did just that.

That was Governor Romney on March 19. I hope he was more careful with the facts when he worked for Bain. If not, he would have cost lost a lot of money, not to mention the liability risks.

Here's what the Washington Post [fact-checker](#) says about Romney's statement:

It's a cheap political shot for Romney to blame "Obama's regulators" for a proposal that was signed into law by a Republican president and was broadly supported at the time. Moreover, we don't see how higher efficiency standards translates into a "ban," especially when light manufacturers have embraced the new standards.

Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) have a number of features that make them convenient political symbols:

- CFLs provide a (literally) visible example of change, with different shape and illumination than conventional bulbs. Other regulations may be much more important targets, but it's hard to visualize banking rules or health insurance requirements.
- CFLs *appear* to cost more (although they are actually cheaper in the end because of lower energy use). Ironically, the greatest strength of the regulation is also its greatest political weakness. One of the main reasons for the regulation is that people have trouble seeing that an immediate cash outlay pays for itself over time. People who have trouble making this tradeoff as consumers have the same difficulty making it as voters.
- Lighting is a feature of everyday life, encountered frequently by almost everyone. Thus, there are many reminders of the issue.
- CFLs replace a familiar object — one that has come to represent the era of American industrial strength and inventiveness. Thus Romney's invocation of Thomas Edison.
- CFLs remind older Americans in particular that the world is changing in ways they may not like. No doubt there are some who suspect that CFLs are secretly manufactured in Kenya!

CFLs also illustrate why conservatives have given up on cost-benefit analysis. The economics strongly favor CFLs, which shows that cost-benefit analysis is an unreliable tool

if your goal is to eliminate all government regulation, however well justified that regulation may be in particular cases.