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Daniel Greenfield posts on how our country has been **left behind**. So to speak. *American progressives like to think of their country as backward and reactionary compared to Europe. And they have never been more right than now when Europe and the rest of the First World have gone right while America under Obama has been left back.*

*In America Alone*, Mark Steyn envisioned the United States as a beleaguered hope in a dying West. Seven years later, American politics are much less healthy than those of the rest of the free world.

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*Sweden's center-right coalition government has won re-election for the first time in a century. ...*

Want to know how sick parts of our country are? John Fund writes on the inauguration of New York's idiot mayor.

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**Forbes OpEd** on DC’s attitude that Americans don’t deserve to be free.

*President Obama’s Kansas speech is a remarkable document. In calling for more government controls, more taxation, more collectivism, he has two paragraphs that give the show away. Take a look at them.*

*“there is a certain crowd in Washington who, for the last few decades, have said, let’s respond to this economic challenge with the same old tune. “The market will take care of everything,” they tell us. If we just cut more regulations and cut more taxes—especially for the wealthy—our economy will grow stronger. Sure, they say, there will be winners and losers. But if the winners do really well, then jobs and prosperity will eventually trickle down to everybody else. And, they argue, even if prosperity doesn’t trickle down, well, that’s the price of liberty.*

*Now, it’s a simple theory. And we have to admit, it’s one that speaks to our rugged individualism and our healthy skepticism of too much government. That’s in America’s DNA. And that theory fits well on a bumper sticker. (Laughter.) But here’s the problem: It doesn’t work. It has never worked. (Applause.) It didn’t work when it was tried in the decade before the Great Depression. It’s not what led to the incredible postwar booms of the ’50s and ’60s. And it didn’t work when we tried it during the last decade. (Applause.) I mean, understand, it’s not as if we haven’t tried this theory.”*

*Though not in Washington, I’m in that “certain crowd” that has been saying for decades that the market will take care of everything. It’s not really a crowd, it’s a tiny group of radicals—radicals for capitalism, in Ayn Rand’s well-turned phrase.*

*The only thing that the market doesn’t take care of is anti-market acts: acts that initiate physical force. That’s why we need government: to wield retaliatory force to defend individual rights. ...*

For a great example of how things really work in Washington, **Tim Carney** has the story of how corporations got the government to ban incandescent bulbs. *Say goodbye to the regular light bulb this New Year.*

*For more than a century, the traditional incandescent bulb was the symbol of American innovation. Starting Jan. 1, the famous bulb is illegal to manufacture in the U.S., and it has become a fitting symbol for the collusion of big business and big government.*

*The 2007 Energy Bill, a stew of regulations and subsidies, set mandatory efficiency standards for most light bulbs. Any bulbs that couldn’t produce a given brightness at the specified energy*

*input would be illegal. That meant the 25-cent bulbs most Americans used in nearly every socket of their home would be outlawed.*

*People often assume green regulations like this represent the triumph of environmental activists trying to save the plant. That's rarely the case, and it wasn't here. Light bulb manufacturers whole-heartedly supported the efficiency standards. General Electric, Sylvania and Philips — the three companies that dominated the bulb industry — all backed the 2007 rule, while opposing proposals to explicitly outlaw incandescent technology (thus leaving the door open for high-efficiency incandescents).*

*This wasn't a case of an industry getting on board with an inevitable regulation in order to tweak it. The lighting industry was the main reason the legislation was moving. As the New York Times reported in 2011, "Philips formed a coalition with environmental groups including the Natural Resources Defense Council to push for higher standards." ...*

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## **Sultan Knish**

### **[A Left-Wing America Stands Alone](#)**

by Daniel Greenfield

American progressives like to think of their country as backward and reactionary compared to Europe. And they have never been more right than now when Europe and the rest of the First World have gone right while America under Obama has been left back.

In America Alone, Mark Steyn envisioned the United States as a beleaguered hope in a dying West. Seven years later, American politics are much less healthy than those of the rest of the free world.

America does stand alone. It stands alone in embracing the rule of the left.

Recently Australia, Japan and Norway welcomed in conservative governments. Tony Abbott, Australia's new prime minister, is a former heavyweight boxer who attended Oxford and is putting a spoke in the wheel of the Global Warming ecohoax. Japan is casting off its pacifism and standing up to the People's Republic of China and Norway gave its left-wing government the boot and moved in "Iron Erma" in a coalition with the libertarian Progress Party which opposes taxes and immigration and supports free enterprise.

Australia, Japan and Norway are not outliers. The majority of First World countries now have conservative governments.

Canada has embraced a patriotic foreign policy and energy exploration under Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his conservative Likud party have continued to move Israel's economy toward free enterprise. And even in the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron, for all his follies, is a conservative, even if he is more McCain than DeMint, and has pushed for deregulation and welfare reform.

Sweden's center-right coalition government has won re-election for the first time in a century. Norway and Sweden, countries that Americans used to consider the very embodiments of Socialism, now both have conservative governments.

In Germany, Angela Merkel will serve a third term as chancellor; although like many European conservative governments, she will have to compromise and form a coalition with the left. The Netherlands still has a conservative government which has come out against multiculturalism and the welfare state.

In Spain, the center-right People's Party won the biggest majority of any party in three decades and is projected to win reelection. In Poland, the center-right Civic Platform continues to govern. In Greece, it's the center-right New Democracy. In Portugal, it's the Social Democratic Party and the People's Party (somewhat on the right, despite their names). In Iceland, it's the conservative Independence Party and the Progressive Party (also on the right, despite its name.)

Even Europe's left-wing parties have had to adapt to the new economic environment. Denmark's Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, who has been in the news lately for all the wrong reasons, has suffered a severe setback in municipal elections and is scrambling to hold her left-wing government together. And even Thorning-Schmidt only made it this far by embracing welfare reform, cutting corporate taxes and slashing unemployment benefits.

The rule of the radical left in the United States is very much an outlier in the rest of the First World where conservative and center-right parties predominate. The conventional First World response to the economic crisis has been to cut spending and reform welfare, while in the United States has spent more money than ever before and expanded welfare.

Much of Europe now favors less federalism and less immigration. The United States has expanded its federal government dramatically and both Democratic and Republican leaders support amnesty for illegal aliens at a time when immigration is politically toxic everywhere else.

The only major European countries with a sizable population and serious economic problems ruled by the left are France and Italy and both are approaching economic collapse. France's ruling left has become wildly unpopular and Italy is still imploding in slow motion. While the American left insists that historical inevitability is on its side, it has lost nearly everywhere else. America stands alone under the rule of the left, in uncontrolled spending, uncontrolled immigration and the iron hand of the welfare state.

There are key differences.

America's massive wealth and resources have allowed the left to act as if it could borrow against them indefinitely to finance its big government schemes. Imagine a billionaire's fortune falling into the hands of his idiot wastrel son who has no idea that money ever runs out.

Smaller countries don't have the luxury of running up infinite debts and not worrying about how they will be paid back or pretending that impossible rates of economic growth will compensate for trillion dollar deficits.

America is the left's economic fantasyland because it has so much that they imagine that it will take a long time to bankrupt.

Most European conservative parties are still much less of the right than even the compromised Republican Party. European conservatives are generally closer to liberal Republicans. By European standards, Jim Huntsman would be a typical conservative. Bloomberg running on the GOP ticket would raise no eyebrows in Europe.

Europe is dominated by parliamentary democracies where it would have been impossible for an executive to stay in office on popularity and racial guilt after his actual policies had been completely discredited. In a parliamentary democracy, the 2010 midterm elections wouldn't have just meant a Republican House of Representatives, but would have booted Obama out of the White House.

Conservatives denounce populist politics in America, but it's actually the remnants of the system that safeguards political power from populist elections that has kept the Senate and the White House in the hands of the left while turning over the House of Representatives to the Republicans creating a crisis in which the populist body could do nothing, while Obama unilaterally ushered in an imperial presidency.

European conservative parties are also more adaptable because liberal conservative parties can form coalitions with more conservative parties. A similar system in the United States would allow the Tea Party to function as a junior conservative party while the Republican Party continued to function as its more centrist big sister, making conservative concessions to the Tea Party in exchange for its votes.

There are Tea Party leaders who already envision such a move which frightens the GOP leadership. But GOP leaders might want to consider whether such a conservative coalition might not be in their own best interests. The Republican Party would be freed from its right and could play at being moderates without worrying about accusations that it's a party of extremists, while at the same time there would be a negotiated system of imposing conservative compromises on it at the legislative level.

A Republican Party-Tea Party coalition would probably achieve a lot more reforms considering that even the UK's coalition between the Conservative Party and the left-wing Liberal Democrats achieved more reforms than the Republicans did during the Bush administration.

Another major difference is that America has a higher percentage of minorities than most other First World countries. In many First World nations, the left has assembled minorities into a welfare coalition. But such a coalition is much more potent in the United States because of demographics and guilt over segregation and slavery.

Higher minority birth rates also mean that the United States has a larger percentage of the youth vote than many First World countries and a younger electorate is dumber and more vulnerable to bells and whistles. A country with an older population would not have embarrassed itself by running around in Obama t-shirts and weeping and fainting at his rallies. Older people are capable of behaving stupidly, but it takes a country with a lower voter age to elect a man whose only real credential was celebrity.

The ultimate ambition of the left is to alter demographics of the United States and the rest of the developed world to a majority-minority population that will allow them to loot the evil racist white minority of its wealth to finance their Socialist schemes. Despite European open border migration, the United States is closer to reaching this brink than many other countries which

makes it more vulnerable. As long as minority groups participate in the left's welfare coalition, immigration means economic collapse.

As long as minority groups participate in the left's welfare coalition, immigration means economic collapse. There is no possibility of maintaining national prosperity without drastically limiting immigration. Economic conservatism and open borders to welfare populations with voting rights are utterly incompatible and cannot be made to work no matter how many libertarians and Chamber of Commerce politicians argue otherwise.

Finally, there is the Obama factor.

Hillary Clinton would probably have lost in 2012. Most Democratic hacks would have. But the cult of personality built around Obama by the news and entertainment industry has been very hard to breach. Only the "If you like your health plan" lie has finally put a serious dent in his likability and trust ratings.

Obama is something unique. He's the end product of a venture by liberal billionaires from the financial and tech sectors to build a radical Trojan horse politician. They invested a great deal of money into their project and the dividends have been huge. No other First World country has been victimized by such a calculated scheme or had so many resources invested in hijacking its democracy.

Some 6 billion dollars were raised and spent in the 2012 election. Those are astronomical amounts of money and they are probably only the tip of the iceberg. Beating that kind of spending isn't easy.

While the rest of the First World moves on, America remains trapped in the defunct economic and political grip of the left. After dedicating enormous resources to taking over the Democratic Party and then the country, the left has turned the United States of America into its Soviet Union, a country out of time, its economy and society wracked by the discredited political and economic theories of the left.

## **National Review**

### **[Bill in the China Shop: 'We Won't Wait, We'll Do It Now'](#)**

***De Blasio's inauguration was a left-wing celebration.***

by John Fund

*New York City* — We all knew we were in for something completely different when the inauguration of self-described "progressive" Bill de Blasio as New York's mayor began with a keynote from pro-Communist activist Harry Belafonte.

The 86-year-old singer has a history of extremism. He has been an infamous house guest of Fidel Castro, called Colin Powell and Condi Rice "house slaves" of the Bush administration, and last year compared the free-market Koch brothers to the Ku Klux Klan.

"We will be no longer a divided city," he proclaimed as he compared today's New York to a "Dickensian" nightmare, as departing mayor Mike Bloomberg looked on stone-faced. "We can

become America's DNA for the future."

He was followed by the Reverend Fred Lucas Jr., whose talk was dominated by slavery metaphors and analogies. He compared New York's five boroughs to a "plantation" and managed to cram into his short speech other references to slavery, such as "shackles," "bondage," "auction blocks," "the Emancipation Proclamation," the "Civil War," and the "Reconstruction Era."

It was almost a relief to then hear Letitia James, a former Legal Aid Society lawyer who is now the city's new public advocate. She railed against "a gilded age of inequality," "stop-and-frisk abuses," and "land grabs for more luxury condos." (There's actually some truth in that last phrase.)

Bill Clinton then rose and tried to strike a little balance. But the crowd was having none of it. When he praised retiring mayor Bloomberg for leaving New York "stronger and healthier" after twelve years in office, there was dead silence.

The cheers were saved for de Blasio, who proclaimed a "new progressive direction" that will "take dead aim at the 'Tale of Two Cities'" injustices he emphasized in his campaign.

He then recited the key elements of his platform: affordable-housing projects, an end to hospital closures, reform of the "broken" stop-and-frisk policy, and a tax on upper-income earners. After each item, he would say, "We won't wait, we'll do it now."

Not content with promoting his own agenda, he had to take swipes at something called the "far right," which he zinged for its agenda of "trickle-down economics" and giving "more to the most fortunate." Luckily, much of de Blasio's fiscal program will need approval from New York governor Andrew Cuomo and state legislators — who, for all their faults, don't appreciate the "Bill in the China Shop" approach of the new mayor.

Noah Rothman, a writer for Mediaite.com, was taken aback by the tone and tenor of the speeches. He tweeted that "MSNBC [is] really missing a branding opportunity here. . . . We're swearing in a new prime time host." Indeed, we can only thank the schedulers for at least sparing us from having MSNBC's Al Sharpton at the podium.

The speeches finally over, the crowd went into City Hall to celebrate the arrival of the New Progressivism. I noted that Bertha Lewis, the former national head of the scandal-ridden ACORN "community-organizing" group, was an honored guest. Last fall, the *New York Post* reported that, according to a Democratic insider, ACORN had long sought to put de Blasio into the mayor's office. "Without exaggeration, ACORN's long-range plan since 2001 was to elect de Blasio mayor," the insider said. "De Blasio was a big ACORN project."

For his part, de Blasio has always stood by ACORN, releasing a statement during last fall's campaign that said: "Bertha Lewis is one of the city's most passionate and effective progressive leaders, and I'm proud to have worked with her for years."

He will almost certainly be working with her and all her friends for the next four years.

As Bette Davis said in the film *All About Eve*: "Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy ride."

**Forbes**

**Obama To Americans: You Don't Deserve To Be Free**

by Harry Binswanger

President Obama's Kansas speech is a remarkable document. In calling for more government controls, more taxation, more collectivism, he has two paragraphs that give the show away. Take a look at them.

there is a certain crowd in [Washington](#) who, for the last few decades, have said, let's respond to this economic challenge with the same old tune. "The market will take care of everything," they tell us. If we just cut more regulations and cut more taxes—especially for the wealthy—our economy will grow stronger. Sure, they say, there will be winners and losers. But if the winners do really well, then jobs and prosperity will eventually trickle down to everybody else. And, they argue, even if prosperity doesn't trickle down, well, that's the price of liberty.

Now, it's a simple theory. And we have to admit, it's one that speaks to our rugged individualism and our healthy skepticism of too much government. That's in America's DNA. And that theory fits well on a bumper sticker. (Laughter.) But here's the problem: It doesn't work. It has never worked. (Applause.) It didn't work when it was tried in the decade before the Great Depression. It's not what led to the incredible postwar booms of the '50s and '60s. And it didn't work when we tried it during the last decade. (Applause.) I mean, understand, it's not as if we haven't tried this theory.

Though not in Washington, I'm in that "certain crowd" that has been saying for decades that the market will take care of everything. It's not really a crowd, it's a tiny group of radicals—radicals for capitalism, in Ayn Rand's well-turned phrase.

The only thing that the market doesn't take care of is anti-market acts: acts that initiate physical force. That's why we need government: to wield retaliatory force to defend individual rights.

Radicals for capitalism would, as the Declaration of Independence says, use government only "to secure these rights"—the rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. (Yes, I added "property" in there—property rights are inseparable from the other three.)

That's the political philosophy on which Obama is trying to hang the blame for the recent financial crisis and every other social ill. But ask yourself, are we few radical capitalists in charge? Have radical capitalists been in charge at any time in the last, oh, say 100 years?

I pick 100 years deliberately, because it was exactly 100 years ago that a gigantic anti-capitalist measure was put into effect: the Federal Reserve System. For 100 years, government, not the free market, has controlled money and banking. How's that worked out? How's the value of the dollar held up since 1913? Is it worth one-fiftieth of its value then or only one-one-hundredth? You be the judge. How did the dollar hold up over the 100 years before this government take-over of money and banking? It actually gained slightly in value.

Laissez-faire hasn't existed since the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. That was the first of a plethora of government crimes against the free market.



Radical capitalists are just beginning to have a slight effect on the Right wing. The overwhelming majority on the Right are eclectic. Which is a nice way of saying inconsistent.

The typical Republican would never, ever say “the market will take care of everything.” He’d say, “the market will take care of most things, and for the other things, we need the regulatory-welfare state.”

They are for individualism—except when they are against it. They are against free markets and individualism not only when they agree with the Left that we must have antitrust laws and the Federal Reserve, but also when they demand immigration controls, government schools, regulatory agencies, Medicare, laws prohibiting abortion, Social [Security](#), “public works” projects, the “social safety net,” laws against insider trading, banking regulation, and the whole system of fiat money.

Obama blames economic woes, some real some invented (“inequality”) on a philosophy and policy that was abandoned a century ago. What doesn’t exist is what he says didn’t work.

Obama absurdly suggests that timid, half-hearted, compromisers, like George W. Bush, installed laissez-faire capitalism—on the grounds that they tinkered with one or two regulations (Glass-Steagall) and marginal tax rates—while blanking out the fact that under the Bush administration, government spending ballooned, growing much faster than under Clinton, and 50,000 new regulations were added to the Federal Register.

The philosophy of individualism and the politics of laissez-faire would mean government spending of about one-tenth its present level. It would also mean an end to all regulatory agencies: no SEC, FDA, NLRB, FAA, OSHA, EPA, FTC, ATF, CFTC, FHA, FCC—to name just some of the better known of the 430 agencies listed in the [federal register](#).

Even you, dear reader, are probably wondering how on earth anyone could challenge things like Social Security, government schools, and the FDA. But that’s not the point. The point is: these statist, anti-capitalist programs exist and have existed for about a century. The point is: Obama is pretending that the [Progressive PGR +0.41%](#) Era, the New Deal, and the Great Society were repealed, so that he can blame the financial crisis on capitalism. He’s pretending that George Bush was George Washington.

We radical capitalists say that it was the regulatory-welfare state that imploded in 2008. You may disagree, but let’s argue that out, rather than engaging in the Big Lie that what failed was laissez-faire and individualism.

The question is: in the messy mixture of government controls and remnants of capitalism, which element caused the Great Depression and the recent financial crisis?

By raising that question, we uncover the fundamental: the meaning of capitalism and the meaning of government controls. Capitalism means freedom. Government means force.

Suddenly, the whole issue comes into focus: Obama is saying that freedom leads to poverty and force leads to wealth. He’s saying: “Look, we tried leaving you free to live your own life, and that didn’t work. You have to be forced, you have to have your earnings seized by the state, you

have to work under our directions—under penalty of fines or imprisonment. You don't deserve to be free."

As a bit of ugly irony, this is precisely what former white slave-owners said after the Civil War: "The black man can't handle freedom; we have to force him for his own good." The innovation of the Left is to extend that viewpoint to all races.

Putting the issue as force vs. freedom shows how the shoe is on the other foot regarding what Obama said. Let me re-write it:

there is a certain crowd in Washington who, for the last few decades, have said, let's respond to this economic challenge with the same old tune. "The government will take care of everything," they tell us. If we just pile on even more regulations and raise taxes—especially on the wealthy—our economy will grow stronger. Sure, they say, there will be winners and losers. But if the losers are protected by more social programs and a higher minimum wage, if there is more Quantitative Easing by the Fed, then jobs and prosperity will eventually trickle up to everybody else. And, they argue, even if prosperity doesn't trickle up, well, that's the price of the social safety net.

Now, it's a simple theory. And we have to admit, it's one that speaks to our intellectuals' collectivism and Paul Krugman's skepticism about freedom. That's in Harvard's DNA. And that theory fits well on a bumper sticker. (Laughter.) But here's the problem: It doesn't work. It has never worked. (Applause.) It didn't work when it was tried in the Soviet Union. It's not what led to the incredible booms in India and China. And it didn't work when [Europe](#) tried it during over the last decades. (Applause.) I mean, understand, it's not as if we haven't tried this statist theory.

How does that sound? That's blaming an actual, existing condition—government controls and wealth-expropriation—not a condition that ended in the late 19th century.

So which is the path to prosperity and happiness—freedom or force? Remember that force is aimed at preventing you from acting on your rational judgment.

Obama's real antagonist is Ayn Rand, who made the case that reason is man's basic means of survival and coercion is anti-reason. Force initiated against free, innocent men is directed at stopping them from acting on their own thinking. It makes them, under threat of fines and imprisonment, act as the government demands rather than as they think their self-interest requires. That's the whole point of threatening force: to *make* people act against their own judgment.

The radical, uncompromised, laissez-faire capitalism that Obama pretends was in place in 2008 is exactly what morality demands. Because, as Ayn Rand wrote in 1961: "No man has the right to *initiate the use* of physical force against others. . . . To claim the right to *initiate* the use of physical force against another man—the right to compel his agreement by the threat of physical destruction—is to evict oneself automatically from the realm of rights, of morality and of the intellect."

Obama and his fellow statist have indeed evicted themselves from that realm

## Examiner

### Industry, not environmentalists, killed traditional bulbs

by Tim Carney

Say goodbye to the regular light bulb this New Year.

For more than a century, the traditional incandescent bulb was the symbol of American innovation. Starting Jan. 1, the famous bulb is illegal to manufacture in the U.S., and it has become a fitting symbol for the collusion of big business and big government.

The [2007 Energy Bill](#), a stew of regulations and subsidies, set mandatory efficiency standards for most light bulbs. Any bulbs that couldn't produce a given brightness at the specified energy input would be illegal. That meant the 25-cent bulbs most Americans used in nearly every socket of their home would be outlawed.

People often assume green regulations like this represent the triumph of environmental activists trying to save the planet. That's rarely the case, and it wasn't here. Light bulb manufacturers whole-heartedly supported the efficiency standards. General Electric, Sylvania and Philips — the three companies that dominated the bulb industry — all backed the 2007 rule, while opposing proposals to explicitly outlaw incandescent technology (thus leaving the door open for high-efficiency incandescents).

This wasn't a case of an industry getting on board with an inevitable regulation in order to tweak it. The lighting industry was the main reason the legislation was moving. As the [New York Times reported](#) in 2011, "Philips formed a coalition with environmental groups including the Natural Resources Defense Council to push for higher standards."

Industry support for the regulations struck lawmakers and journalists as a ringing endorsement of the regulations. Republican Congressman [Fred Upton](#), who has since flip-flopped and attacked the regulations, cosponsored the light bulb provision in 2007. His excuse, according to conservatives I spoke to: It couldn't be that bad if the industry supported it.

Liberals used this very argument to ridicule Republicans' 2011 efforts to repeal the law. Democratic congressman [Steny Hoyer](#) defended the rule by saying, "The standards are supported by the lightbulb industry."

[Joe Romm](#) at the Center for American Progress pinned repeal efforts on the "extremist Tea Party wing of the party, which opposes all government standards, even ones that the lightbulb industry itself wants."

That "even" signifies that the industry's support indicates consensus. Instead, it signifies how consumers lose.

Competitive markets with low costs of entry have a characteristic that consumers love and businesses lament: very low profit margins. GE, Philips and Sylvania dominated the U.S. market in incandescents, but they couldn't convert that dominance into price hikes. Because of light bulb's low material and manufacturing costs, any big climb in prices would have invited new

competitors to undercut the giants — and that new competitor would probably have won a distribution deal with Wal-Mart.

So, simply the threat of competition kept profit margins low on the traditional light bulb — that's the magic of capitalism. GE and Sylvania searched for higher profits by improving the bulb — think of the GE Soft White bulb. These companies, with their giant research budgets, made advances with halogen, LED and fluorescent technologies, and even high-efficiency incandescents. They sold these bulbs at a much higher prices — but they couldn't get many customers to buy them for those high prices. That's the hard part about capitalism — consumers, not manufacturers, get to demand what something is worth.

Capitalism ruining their party, the bulb-makers turned to government. Philips teamed up with NRDC. GE leaned on its huge lobbying army — the largest in the nation — and soon they were able to ban the low-profit-margin bulbs.

The high-tech, high-cost, high-margin bulbs have advantages: They live longer and use much less electricity. In the long run, this can save people money. But depending on your circumstances, these gains might be mitigated or eradicated.

The current replacement for traditional bulbs are compact fluorescents (those curly bulbs). They give off UV rays, contain mercury gas, take a while to get bright and don't last any longer than regular bulbs if you flip them on and off a lot.

Newer technologies, like LED bulbs, are better than CFLs, and they supposedly last 20 years. But they cost even more. In your office building, they probably make sense. In your house? Well they won't last two decades in a house full of kids who wrestle with the dog and throw footballs around the living room (maybe Congress should ban domestic wrestling and passing).

There is a middle ground between everyone using traditional bulbs and traditional bulbs being illegal. It's called free choice: Let people choose if they want more efficient and expensive bulbs. Maybe they'll chose LEDs for some purposes and cheap bulbs for others.

But consumer choice is no good either for nanny-staters or companies seeking high profit margins.

Technologies often run the course from breakthrough innovation to obsolete. Think of the 8-track, the Model T or Kodachrome film. But the market didn't kill the traditional light bulb. Government did it, at the request of big business.

*Timothy P. Carney is The Washington Examiner's senior political columnist*

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Ringing in the New Year

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BLACK MONDAY: THE DAY INEPT COACHES OF INEPT PROGRAMS GET THE BOOT... IN THE NFL.