

Cool It **by Dan Jacoby**

On the day former Vice President Al Gore testifies on Capitol Hill, I bought a new light bulb. It cost me over \$16, and I'm saving money on it.

Yes, you read that right. The savings come because I didn't buy the usual, or incandescent, light bulb. Instead, I bought a "compact fluorescent" light bulb, which is more expensive to purchase but ends up costing a lot less.

What's that? You're not willing to take me at my word? You want me to prove it? And you're wondering what my light bulb has to do with Al Gore? All right, I'll prove it, and I'll tie the light bulb in with the former Vice President.

First of all, I'll explain the savings from my new light bulb. My old incandescent light bulb used 75 watts of power and lasted somewhere between 750 and 1,000 hours. The new bulb uses 20 watts and will last about 6,000 hours. As a result, I will be using 55 fewer watts, and that adds up. Based on the rate charged on my latest electric bill, I'll save almost \$57 in electric costs over the life of my bulb. Even though this bulb costs more than the 6-8 incandescent bulbs I would have bought, I'll still save over \$45.

Oh yes – for those who noticed the difference between 75 watts and 20 watts, the new bulb is actually brighter than the old one. Its brightness is actually equivalent to an old-style 85-watt bulb. To be fair, the new bulb's light is a cooler shade, somewhat bluer and less yellow. But it doesn't take long to get used to it. In addition, this bulb generates less heat, since it's so much more efficient. So it's cooler in more ways than one (with its spiral shape it also looks cool).

Now I'll connect all this with Al Gore, although I suspect you already know what the connection is.

Vice President Gore testified today on global warming. For the most part, his testimony was smooth and smoothly received, even by former Speaker Dennis Hastert. Of course, there was James Inhofe with his ridiculous claims and, quite frankly, stupid questions. But he was overwhelmed by the support Gore received from the rest of the committee.

Gore's point, as it has been for years, is that we can all do something to reduce global warming, and many of the things we can do will actually benefit us as individuals in the short term. For example, by replacing our incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, we save energy and save money.

It's a start. And it's really, really cool – in many ways.