



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
29.01.2014 Bulletin 2014/05

(51) Int Cl.:
H05B 33/08 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **13150915.0**

(22) Date of filing: **11.01.2013**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AL AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MK MT NL NO PL PT RO RS SE SI SK SM TR
Designated Extension States:
BA ME

(72) Inventors:
• **Kuo, Ching-Chuan**
Taiwan (TW)
• **Lin, Yung Lin**
Palo Alto, CA 94303 (US)

(30) Priority: **26.07.2012 US 201213559451**

(74) Representative: **Lippert, Stachow & Partner**
Patentanwälte
Postfach 30 02 08
51412 Bergisch Gladbach (DE)

(71) Applicant: **O2 Micro, Inc.**
Santa Clara, CA 95054 (US)

(54) **Circuits and methods for driving light sources**

(57) A dimming controller can operate in a first mode or a second mode to control dimming of a light-emitting diode (LED) light source. The dimming controller can include a voltage control terminal and a current control terminal. The voltage control terminal provides a pulse signal when the dimming controller operates in the first mode to operate a control switch in either a first state or a second state. A first current flowing through the LED light

source increases when the control switch is in the first state and decreases when the control switch is in the second state. The voltage control terminal provides a control signal to the control switch to cut off the first current when the dimming controller operates in the second mode. The current control terminal conducts a second current through the LED light source when the dimming controller operates in the second mode.

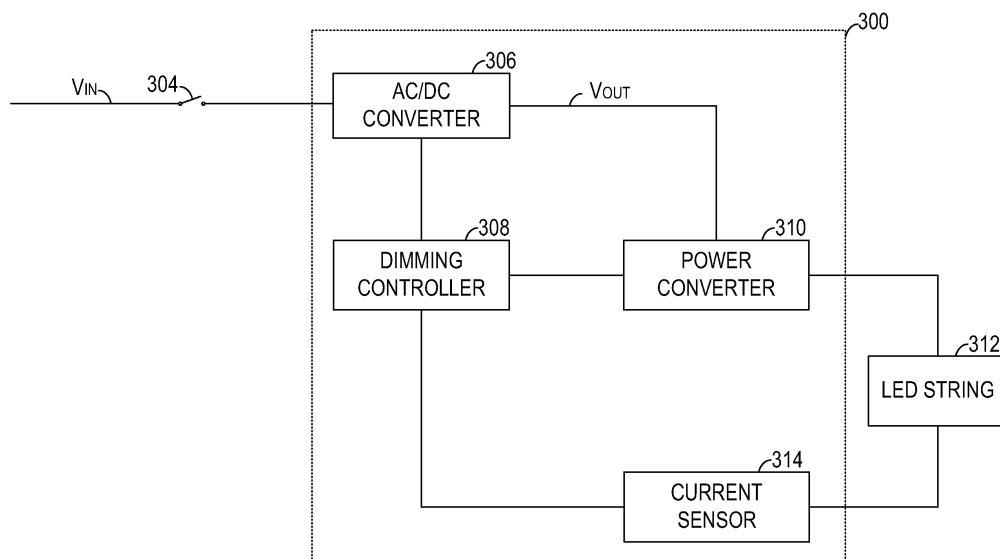


FIG. 3

Description

RELATED APPLICATION

5 **[0001]** This application is a continuation-in-part of the co-pending U.S. Patent Application, Application Number 13/100,434, entitled "Circuits And Methods For Driving Light Sources", filed on May 4, 2011, which itself is a continuation-in-part of the U.S. Patent Application, Application No. 12/415,028, filed on March 31, 2009, entitled "Driving Circuit with Continuous Dimming Function for Driving Light sources" (now U.S. Patent No. 8,076,867), which itself is a continuation-in-part of the U.S. Patent Application, Application No. 12/316,480, filed on December 12, 2008, entitled "Driving Circuit with Dimming Controller for Driving Light Sources" (now U.S. Patent No. 8,044,608), and all of which are fully incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

15 **[0002]** In recent years, light sources such as light-emitting diodes (LEDs) have been improved through technological advances in material and manufacturing processes. An LED possesses relatively high efficiency, long life, and vivid colors, and can be used in a variety of industries including the automotive, computer, telecom, military and consumer goods, etc. One example is an LED lamp which uses LEDs to replace traditional light sources such as electrical filament.

20 **[0003]** FIG. 1 shows a schematic diagram of a conventional LED driving circuit 100. The LED driving circuit 100 utilizes an LED string 106 as a light source. The LED string 106 includes a group of LEDs connected in series. A power converter 102 converts an input voltage V_{in} to a desired output DC voltage V_{out} for powering the LED string 106. A switch 104 coupled to the LED driving circuit 100 can enable or disable the input voltage V_{in} to the LED string 106, and therefore can turn on or turn off the LED lamp. The power converter 102 receives a feedback signal from a current sensing resistor R_{sen} and adjusts the output voltage V_{out} to make the LED string 106 generate a desired light output. One of the drawbacks of this solution is that a desired light output is predetermined. In operation, the light output of the LED string 106 is set to a predetermined level and may not be adjusted by users.

25 **[0004]** FIG. 2 illustrates a schematic diagram of another conventional LED driving circuit 200. A power converter 102 converts an input voltage V_{in} to a desired output DC voltage V_{out} for powering the LED string 106. A switch 104 coupled to LED driving circuit 100 can enable or disable the input voltage V_{in} to the LED string 106, and therefore can turn on or turn off the LED lamp. The LED string 106 is coupled to a linear LED current regulator 208. Operational amplifiers 210 in the linear LED current regulator 208 compares a reference signal REF and a current monitoring signal from current sensing resistor R_{sen} , and generates a control signal to adjust the resistance of transistor Q1 in a linear mode. Therefore, the LED current flowing through the LED string 106 can be adjusted accordingly. In this solution, in order to control the light output of the LED string 106, users may need to use a dedicated apparatus, such as a specially designed switch with adjusting buttons or a switch that can receive a remote control signal, to adjust the reference signal REF .

SUMMARY

40 **[0005]** In one embodiment, a dimming controller can operate in either a first mode or a second mode to control dimming of a light-emitting diode (LED) light source. In one such embodiment, the dimming controller includes a voltage control terminal and a current control terminal. The voltage control terminal provides a pulse signal when the dimming controller operates in the first mode to operate a control switch in either a first state or a second state. A first current flowing through the LED light source increases when the control switch is in the first state, and decreases when the control switch is in the second state. The voltage control terminal provides a control signal to the control switch to cut off the first current when the dimming controller operates in the second mode. The current control terminal conducts a second current through the LED light source when the dimming controller operates in the second mode.

45 **[0006]** In another embodiment, an electronic system comprises a power converter configured to receive an input voltage from a rectifier and provide an output voltage to a light-emitting diode (LED) light source, wherein a power switch transfers power from an AC power source to said rectifier when said power switch is on; and a dimming controller coupled to said power converter and configured to detect a dimming request signal indicative of an operation of said power switch, said dimming controller operable in a mode selected from a first mode and a second mode to control dimming of said LED light source in response to said dimming request signal, wherein during operation in said first mode, said dimming controller provides a pulse signal on a voltage control terminal to control a first current flowing through said LED light source, wherein said first current increases during a first state of said pulse signal and decreases during a second state of said pulse signal, wherein during operation in said second mode, said dimming controller provides a control signal on said voltage control terminal to cut off said first current and conducts a substantially constant current through said LED light source.

55 **[0007]** Further, said electronic system may comprise a control switch coupled to said LED light source and controlled

by said pulse signal and said control signal, wherein said control switch is turned on and off according to said pulse signal during operation in said first mode, and wherein said control switch is maintained off according to said control signal during operation in said second mode.

[0008] In addition, in said electronic system, said dimming controller may further comprise: a trigger monitoring unit configured to receive a switch monitoring signal indicative of a conductance status of a power switch and further configured to detect said dimming request signal according to said switch monitoring signal; a counter configured to provide a count value that varies in response to said dimming request signal; and a mode selection module coupled to said counter and configured to select said operation mode from said first mode and said second mode according to said count value. Further, said trigger monitoring unit may receive said dimming request signal if said switch monitoring signal indicates that said power switch performs a turn-off operation. Further, said mode selection module may compare said count value with a threshold to select said operation mode.

[0009] In addition, in said electronic system, said dimming controller may further comprise: a driver configured to receive a reference signal and a pulse-width modulation signal, and further configured to compare said reference signal and a sensing signal indicating said first current flowing through said LED light source, wherein during operation in said first mode and with said pulse-width modulation signal in a first state, said driver switches said pulse signal between said pulse signal's first state and said pulse signal's second state according to a result of said comparing, and maintains said pulse signal in its second state with said pulse-width modulation signal in a second state. In addition, said dimming controller may further comprise a dimmer coupled to said driver and configured to maintain the level of said reference signal and adjust the duty cycle of said pulse-width modulation signal if said dimming request signal is received. In addition, said dimming controller may further comprise a dimmer coupled to said driver and configured to adjust both the level of said reference signal and the duty cycle of said pulse-width modulation signal if said dimming request signal is received. Further, said driver may terminate said pulse signal and generate said control signal by keeping said pulse-width modulation signal in its second state if said dimming controller is switched to said second mode.

[0010] In another embodiment, a method for adjusting power for a light-emitting diode (LED) light source comprises: powering said light source by a regulated voltage from a power converter; receiving a switch monitoring signal indicative of a conductance status of a power switch coupled between a power source and said power converter; selecting an operation mode from at least a first mode and a second mode according to said switch monitoring signal; operating a control switch at one of a first state and a second state if said first mode is selected, wherein a first current flowing through said LED light source increases during operation at said first state and decreases during operation at said second state; cutting off said first current if said second mode is selected; and conducting a substantially constant current through said LED light source if said second mode is selected.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Features and advantages of embodiments of the claimed subject matter will become apparent as the following detailed description proceeds, and upon reference to the drawings, wherein like numerals depict like parts, and in which:

[0012] FIG. 1 shows a schematic diagram of a conventional LED driving circuit.

[0013] FIG. 2 shows a schematic diagram of another conventional LED driving circuit.

[0014] FIG. 3 shows a block diagram of a light source driving circuit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 4 shows a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 5 shows a structure of a dimming controller in FIG. 4, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 6 illustrates signal waveforms in the analog dimming mode, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 7 illustrates signal waveforms in the burst dimming mode, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 8 illustrates a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller in FIG. 5, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 9 shows a flowchart of a method for adjusting power of a light source, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0021] FIG. 10 shows a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] FIG. 11 shows a structure of a dimming controller in FIG. 10, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0023] FIG. 12 illustrates a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller in FIG. 11, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0024] FIG. 13 shows a flowchart of a method for adjusting power of a light source, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0025] FIG. 14A shows an example of a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. 14B shows an example of a power switch in FIG. 14A, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0027] FIG. 15 shows an example of a structure of a dimming controller in FIG. 14, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 16 illustrates an example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller in FIG. 15, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0029] FIG. 17 illustrates another example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller in FIG. 15, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0030] FIG. 18 shows a flowchart of a method for adjusting power of a light source, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] FIG. 19 shows an example of a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit, in an embodiment according to the present invention.

[0032] FIG. 20 shows an example of a structure of a dimming controller in FIG. 19, in an embodiment according to the present invention.

[0033] FIG. 21 illustrates an example of a diagram illustrating operation of a light source driving circuit including a dimming controller, in an embodiment according to the present invention.

[0034] FIG. 22 shows a flowchart of a method for adjusting power for a light source, in an embodiment according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0035] Reference will now be made in detail to the embodiments of the present invention. While the invention will be described in conjunction with these embodiments, it will be understood that they are not intended to limit the invention to these embodiments. On the contrary, the invention is intended to cover alternatives, modifications and equivalents, which may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

[0036] Furthermore, in the following detailed description of the present invention, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. However, it will be recognized by one of ordinary skill in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well known methods, procedures, components, and circuits have not been described in detail as not to unnecessarily obscure aspects of the present invention.

[0037] FIG. 3 shows an example of a block diagram of a light source driving circuit 300, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In one embodiment, a power switch 304 coupled between a power source V_{in} and the light source driving circuit 300 is operable for selectively coupling the power source to the light source driving circuit 300. The light source driving circuit 300 includes an AC/DC converter 306 for converting an AC input voltage V_{in} from the power source to a DC voltage V_{out} , a power converter 310 coupled to the AC/DC converter 306 for providing an LED string 312 with a regulated power, a dimming controller 308 coupled to the power converter 310 for receiving a switch monitoring signal indicative of an operation of the power switch 304 and for adjusting the regulated power from the power converter 310 according to the switch monitoring signal, and a current sensor 314 for sensing an LED current flowing through the LED string 312. In one embodiment, the power switch 304 can be an on/off switch mounted on the wall.

[0038] In operation, the AC/DC converter 306 converts the input AC voltage V_{in} to the output DC voltage V_{out} . The power converter 310 receives the DC voltage V_{out} and provides the LED string 312 with a regulated power. The current sensor 314 generates a current monitoring signal indicating a level of an LED current flowing through the LED string 312. The dimming controller 308 monitors the operation of the power switch 304, receives the current monitoring signal from the current sensor 314, and is operable for controlling the power converter 310 to adjust power of the LED string 312 in response to the operation of the power switch 304. In one embodiment, the dimming controller 308 operates in an analog dimming mode and adjusts the power of the LED string 312 by adjusting a reference signal indicating a peak value of the LED current. In another embodiment, the dimming controller 308 operates in a burst dimming mode and adjusts the power of the LED string 312 by adjusting a duty cycle of a pulse width modulation (PWM) signal. By adjusting the power of the LED string 312, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted accordingly.

[0039] FIG. 4 shows an example of a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit 400, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 4 is described in combination with FIG. 3. Elements labeled the same as in FIG. 3 have similar functions and will not be detailed described herein.

[0040] The light source driving circuit 400 includes a power converter 310 (shown in FIG. 3) coupled to a power source and coupled to an LED string 312 for receiving power from the power source and for providing a regulated power to the LED string 312. In the example of FIG. 4, the power converter 310 can be a buck converter including an inductor L1, a diode D4 and a control switch Q16. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 4, the control switch Q16 is implemented outside

the dimming controller 308. In another embodiment, the control switch Q16 can be integrated in the dimming controller 308. **[0041]** A dimming controller 308 is operable for receiving a switch monitoring signal indicative of an operation of a power switch, e.g., a power switch 304 coupled between the power source Vin and the light source driving circuit 400, and for adjusting the regulated power from the power converter 310 (including the inductor L1, the diode D4 and the control switch Q16) by controlling the control switch Q16 coupled in series with the LED string 312 according to the switch monitoring signal. The light source driving circuit 400 can further include an AC/DC converter 306 for converting an AC input voltage Vin to a DC output voltage Vout, and a current sensor 314 for sensing an LED current flowing through the LED string 312. In the example of FIG. 4, the AC/DC converter 306 can include a bridge rectifier including diodes D1, D2, D7 and D8. The current sensor 314 can include a current sensing resistor R5.

[0042] In one embodiment, terminals of the dimming controller 308 can include HV_GATE, SEL, CLK, RT, VDD, CTRL, MON and GND. The terminal HV_GATE is coupled to a switch Q27 through a resistor R15 for controlling a conductance status, e.g., ON/OFF status, of the switch Q27 coupled to the LED string 312. A capacitor C11 is coupled between the terminal HV_GATE and ground for regulating a gate voltage of the switch Q27.

[0043] A user can select a dimming mode, e.g., an analog dimming mode or a burst dimming mode, by coupling the terminal SEL to ground through a resistor R4 (as shown in FIG. 4), or coupling the terminal SEL to ground directly.

[0044] The terminal CLK is coupled to the AC/DC converter 306 through a resistor R3, and is coupled to ground through a resistor R6. The terminal CLK can receive a switch monitoring signal indicating an operation of the power switch 304. In one embodiment, the switch monitoring signal can be generated at a common node between the resistor R3 and the resistor R6. A capacitor C12 is coupled to the resistor R6 in parallel for filtering undesired noises. The terminal RT is coupled to ground through a resistor R7 for determining a frequency of a pulse signal generated by the dimming controller 308.

[0045] The terminal VDD is coupled to the switch Q27 through a diode D9 for supplying power to the dimming controller 308. In one embodiment, an energy storage unit, e.g., a capacitor C10, coupled between the terminal VDD and ground can power the dimming controller 308 when the power switch 304 is turned off. In an alternate embodiment, the energy storage unit can be integrated in the dimming controller 308. The terminal GND is coupled to ground.

[0046] The terminal CTRL is coupled to the control switch Q16. The control switch Q16 is coupled in series with the LED string 312 and the switch Q27, and is coupled to ground through the current sensing resistor R5. The dimming controller 308 is operable for adjusting the regulated power from the power converter 310 by controlling a conductance status, e.g., ON and OFF status, of the control switch Q16 using a control signal via the terminal CTRL. The terminal MON is coupled to the current sensing resistor R5 for receiving a current monitoring signal indicating an LED current flowing through the LED string 312. When the switch Q27 is turned on, the dimming controller 308 can adjust the LED current flowing through the LED string 312 to ground by controlling the control switch Q16.

[0047] In operation, when the power switch 304 is turned on, the AC/DC converter 306 converts an input AC voltage Vin to a DC voltage Vout. A predetermined voltage at the terminal HV_GATE is supplied to the switch Q27 through the resistor R15 so that the switch Q27 is turned on.

[0048] If the dimming controller 308 turns on the control switch Q16, the DC voltage Vout powers the LED string 312 and charges the inductor L1. An LED current flows through the inductor L1, the LED string 312, the switch Q27, the control switch Q16, the current sensing resistor R5 to ground. If the dimming controller 308 turns off the control switch Q16, an LED current flows through the inductor L1, the LED string 312 and the diode D4. The inductor L1 is discharged to power the LED string 312. As such, the dimming controller 308 can adjust the regulated power from the power converter 310 by controlling the control switch Q16.

[0049] When the power switch 304 is turned off, the capacitor C10 is discharged to power the dimming controller 308. A voltage across the resistor R6 drops to zero, therefore a switch monitoring signal indicating a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 can be detected by the dimming controller 308 through the terminal CLK. Similarly, when the power switch 304 is turned on, the voltage across the resistor R6 rises to a predetermined voltage, therefore a switch monitoring signal indicating a turn-on operation of the power switch 304 can be detected by the dimming controller 308 through the terminal CLK. If a turn-off operation is detected, the dimming controller 308 can turn off the switch Q27 by pulling the voltage at the terminal HV_GATE to zero such that the LED string 312 can be turned off after the inductor L1 completes discharging. In response to the turn-off operation, the dimming controller 308 can adjust a reference signal indicating a target light output of the LED string 312. Therefore, when the power switch 304 is turned on next time, the LED string 312 can generate a light output according to the adjusted target light output. In other words, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted by the dimming controller 308 in response to the turn-off operation of the power switch 304.

[0050] FIG. 5 shows an example of a structure of the dimming controller 308 in FIG. 4, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 5 is described in combination with FIG. 4. Elements labeled the same as in

FIG. 4 have similar functions and will not be detailed described herein.

[0051] The dimming controller 308 includes a trigger monitoring unit 506, a dimmer 502 and a pulse signal generator 504. The trigger monitoring unit 506 is coupled to ground through a Zener diode ZD1. The trigger monitoring unit 506 can receive a switch monitoring signal indicating an operation of the external power switch 304 through the terminal CLK and can generate a driving signal for driving a counter 526 when an operation of the external power switch 304 is detected at the terminal CLK. The trigger monitoring unit 506 is further operable for controlling a conductance status of the switch Q27. The dimmer 502 is operable for generating a reference signal REF to adjust power of the LED string 312 in an analog dimming mode, or generating a control signal 538 for adjusting a duty cycle of a PWM signal PWM1 to adjust the power of the LED string 312. The pulse signal generator 504 is operable for generating a pulse signal which can turn on a control switch Q16. The dimming controller 308 can further include a start up and under voltage lockout (UVL) circuit 508 coupled to the terminal VDD for selectively turning on one or more components of the dimming controller 308 according to different power condition.

[0052] In one embodiment, the start up and under voltage lockout circuit 508 is operable for turning on all the components of the dimming controller 308 when the voltage at the terminal VDD is greater than a first predetermined voltage. When the power switch 304 is turned off, the start up and under voltage lockout circuit 508 is operable for turning off other components of the dimming controller 308 except the trigger monitoring unit 506 and the dimmer 502 when the voltage at the terminal VDD is less than a second predetermined voltage, in order to save energy. The start up and under voltage lockout circuit 508 is further operable for turning off the trigger monitoring unit 506 and the dimmer 502 when the voltage at the terminal VDD is less than a third predetermined voltage. In one embodiment, the first predetermined voltage is greater than the second predetermined voltage and the second predetermined voltage is greater than the third predetermined voltage. Because the dimming controller 308 can be powered by the capacitor C10 through the terminal VDD, the trigger monitoring unit 506 and the dimmer 502 can still operate for a time period after the power switch 304 is turned off.

[0053] In the dimming controller 308, the terminal SEL is coupled to a current source 532. Users can choose a dimming mode by configuring the terminal SEL, e.g., by coupling the terminal SEL directly to ground or coupling the terminal SEL to ground via a resistor. In one embodiment, the dimming mode can be determined by measuring a voltage at the terminal SEL. If the terminal SEL is directly coupled to ground, the voltage at the terminal SEL is approximately equal to zero. A control circuit can in turn switch on a switch 540, switch off a switch 541 and switch off a switch 542. Therefore, the dimming controller 308 can work in an analog dimming mode and can adjust the power of the LED string 312 (shown in FIG. 4) by adjusting a reference signal REF. In one embodiment, if the terminal SEL is coupled to ground via a resistor R4 having a predetermined resistance (as shown in FIG. 4), the voltage at the terminal SEL can be greater than zero. The control circuit can in turn switch off the switch 540, switch on the switch 541 and switch on the switch 542. Therefore, the dimming controller 308 can work in a burst dimming mode and can adjust the power of the LED string 312 (shown in FIG. 4) by adjusting a duty cycle of a PWM signal PWM1. In other words, different dimming modes can be selected by controlling the ON/OFF status of the switch 540, switch 541 and switch 542. The ON/OFF status of the switch 540, switch 541 and switch 542 can be determined by the voltage at the terminal SEL.

[0054] The pulse signal generator 504 is coupled to ground through the terminal RT and the resistor R7 for generating a pulse signal 536 which can turn on the control switch Q16. The pulse signal generator 504 can have different configurations and is not limited to the configuration as shown in the example of FIG. 5.

[0055] In the pulse signal generator 504, the non-inverting input of an operational amplifier 510 receives a predetermined voltage V1. Thus, the voltage of the inverting input of the operational amplifier 510 can be forced to V1. A current IRT flows through the terminal RT and the resistor R7 to ground. A current I1 flowing through a MOSFET 514 and a MOSFET 515 is equal to IRT. Because the MOSFET 514 and a MOSFET 512 constitute a current mirror, a current I2 flowing through the MOSFET 512 is also substantially equal to IRT. The output of a comparator 516 and the output of a comparator 518 are respectively coupled to the S input and the R input of an SR flip-flop 520. The inverting input of the comparator 516 receives a predetermined voltage V2. The non-inverting input of the comparator 518 receives a predetermined voltage V3. V2 is greater than V3, and V3 is greater than zero, in one embodiment. A capacitor C4 is coupled between the MOSFET 512 and ground, and has one end coupled to a common node between the non-inverting input of the comparator 516 and the inverting input of the comparator 518. The Q output of the SR flip-flop 520 is coupled to the switch Q15 and the S input of an SR flip-flop 522. The switch Q15 is coupled in parallel with the capacitor C4. A conductance status, e.g., ON/OFF status, of the switch Q15 can be determined by the Q output of the SR flip-flop 520.

[0056] Initially, the voltage across the capacitor C4 is approximately equal to zero which is less than V3. Therefore, the R input of the SR flip-flop 520 receives a digital 1 from the output of the comparator 518. The Q output of the SR flip-flop 520 is set to digital 0, which turns off the switch Q15. When the switch Q15 is turned off, the voltage across the capacitor C4 increases as the capacitor C4 is charged by I2. When the voltage across C4 is greater than V2, the S input of the SR flip-flop 520 receives a digital 1 from the output of the comparator 516. The Q output of the SR flip-flop 520 is set to digital 1, which turns on the switch Q15. When the switch Q15 is turned on, the voltage across the capacitor C4 decreases as the capacitor C4 discharges through the switch Q15. When the voltage across the capacitor C4 drops

below V3, the comparator 518 outputs a digital 1, and the Q output of the SR flip-flop 520 is set to digital 0, which turns off the switch Q15. Then the capacitor C4 is charged by I2 again. As such, through the process described above, the pulse signal generator 504 can generate a pulse signal 536 which includes a series of pulses at the Q output of the SR flip-flop 520. The pulse signal 536 is sent to the S input of the SR flip-flop 522.

[0057] The trigger monitoring unit 506 is operable for monitoring an operation of the power switch 304 through the terminal CLK, and is operable for generating a driving signal for driving the counter 526 when an operation of the power switch 304 is detected at the terminal CLK. In one embodiment, when the power switch 304 is turned on, the voltage at the terminal CLK rises to a level that is equal to a voltage across the resistor R6 (shown in FIG. 4). When the power switch 304 is turned off, the voltage at the terminal CLK drops to zero. Therefore, a switch monitoring signal indicating the operation of the power switch 304 can be detected at the terminal CLK. In one embodiment, the trigger monitoring unit 506 generates a driving signal when a turn-off operation is detected at the terminal CLK.

[0058] The trigger monitoring unit 506 is further operable for controlling a conductance status of the switch Q27 through the terminal HV_GATE. When the power switch 304 is turned on, a breakdown voltage across the Zener diode ZD1 is applied to the switch Q27 through the resistor R3. Therefore, the switch Q27 can be turned on. The trigger monitoring unit 506 can turn off the switch Q27 by pulling the voltage at the terminal HV_GATE to zero. In one embodiment, the trigger monitoring unit 506 turns off the switch Q27 when a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 is detected at the terminal CLK and turns on the switch Q27 when a turn-on operation of the power switch 304 is detected at the terminal CLK.

[0059] In one embodiment, the dimmer 502 includes a counter 526 coupled to the trigger monitoring unit 506 for counting operations of the power switch 304, a digital-to-analog converter (D/A converter) 528 coupled to the counter 526. The dimmer 502 can further include a PWM generator 530 coupled to the D/A converter 528. The counter 526 can be driven by the driving signal generated by the trigger monitoring unit 506. More specifically, when the power switch 304 is turned off, the trigger monitoring unit 506 detects a negative edge of the voltage at the terminal CLK and generates a driving signal, in one embodiment. The counter value of the counter 526 can be increased, e.g., by 1, in response to the driving signal. The D/A converter 528 reads the counter value from the counter 526 and generates a dimming signal (e.g., control signal 538 or reference signal REF) based on the counter value. The dimming signal can be used to adjust a target power level of the power converter 310, which can in turn adjust the light output of the LED string 312.

[0060] In the burst dimming mode, the switch 540 is off, the switch 541 and the switch 542 are on. The inverting input of the comparator 534 receives a reference signal REF1 which can be a DC signal having a predetermined substantially constant voltage. The voltage of REF1 can determine a peak value of the LED current, which can in turn determine the maximum light output of the LED string 312. The dimming signal can be a control signal 538 which is applied to the PWM generator 530 for adjusting a duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1. By adjusting the duty cycle of PWM1, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted no greater than the maximum light output determined by REF1. For example, if PWM1 has a duty cycle of 100%, the LED string 312 can have the maximum light output. If the duty cycle of PWM1 is less than 100%, the LED string 312 can have a light output that is lower than the maximum light output.

[0061] In the analog dimming mode, the switch 540 is on, the switch 541 and the switch 542 are off, and the dimming signal can be an analog reference signal REF having an adjustable voltage. The D/A converter 528 can adjust the voltage of the reference signal REF according to the counter value of the counter 526. The voltage of REF can determine a peak value of the LED current, which can in turn determine an average value of the LED current. As such, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted by adjusting the reference signal REF.

[0062] In one embodiment, the D/A converter 528 can decrease the voltage of REF in response to an increase of the counter value. For example, if the counter value is 0, the D/A converter 528 adjusts the reference signal REF to have a voltage V4. If the counter value is increased to 1 when a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 is detected at the terminal CLK by the trigger monitoring unit 506, the D/A converter 528 adjusts the reference signal REF to have a voltage V5 that is less than V4. Yet in another embodiment, the D/A converter 528 can increase the voltage of REF in response to an increase of the counter value.

[0063] In one embodiment, the counter value will be reset to zero after the counter 526 reaches its maximum counter value. For example, if the counter 526 is a 2-bit counter, the counter value will increase from 0 to 1, 2, 3 and then return to zero after four turn-off operations have been detected. Accordingly, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted from a first level to a second level, then to a third level, then to a fourth level, and then back to the first level.

[0064] The inverting input of a comparator 534 can selectively receive the reference signal REF and the reference signal REF1. For example, the inverting input of the comparator 534 receives the reference signal REF through the switch 540 in the analog dimming mode, and receives the reference signal REF1 through the switch 541 in the burst dimming mode. The non-inverting input of the comparator 534 is coupled to the resistor R5 through the terminal MON for receiving a current monitoring signal SEN from the current sensing resistor R5. The voltage of the current monitoring signal SEN can indicate an LED current flowing through the LED string 312 when the switch Q27 and the control switch Q16 are turned on.

[0065] The output of the comparator 534 is coupled to the R input of the SR flip-flop 522. The Q output of the SR flip-flop 522 is coupled to an AND gate 524. The PWM signal PWM1 generated by the PWM generator 530 is applied to the

AND gate 524. The AND gate 524 outputs a control signal to control the control switch Q16 through the terminal CTRL.

[0066] If the analog dimming mode is selected, the switch 540 is turned on and the switches 541 and 542 are turned off. The control switch Q16 is controlled by the SR flip-flop 522. In operation, when the power switch 304 is turned on, the breakdown voltage across the Zener diode ZD1 turns on the switch Q27. The SR flip-flop 522 generates a digital 1 at the Q output to turn on the control switch Q16 in response to the pulse signal 536 generated by the pulse generator 504. An LED current flowing through the inductor L1, the LED string 312, the switch Q27, the control switch Q16, the current sensing resistor R5 to ground. The LED current gradually increases because the inductor resists a sudden change of the LED current. As a result, the voltage across the current sensing resistor R5, that is, the voltage of the current monitoring signal SEN can be increased. When the voltage of SEN is greater than that of the reference signal REF, the comparator 534 generates a digital 1 at the R input of the SR flip-flop 522 so that the SR flip-flop 522 generates a digital 0 to turn off the control switch Q16. After the control switch Q16 is turned off, the inductor L1 is discharged to power the LED string 312. An LED current which flows through the inductor L1, the LED string 312 and the diode D4 gradually decreases. The control switch Q16 is turned on when the SR flip-flop 522 receives a pulse at the S input again, and then the LED current flows through the current sensing resistor R5 to ground again. When the voltage of the current monitoring signal SEN is greater than that of the reference signal REF, the control switch Q16 is turned off by the SR flip-flop 522. As described above, the reference signal REF determines a peak value of the LED current, which can in turn determine the light output of the LED string 312. By adjusting the reference signal REF, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted.

[0067] In the analog dimming mode, when the power switch 304 is turned off, the capacitor C10 (shown in FIG. 4) is discharged to power the dimming controller 308. The counter value of the counter 526 can be increased by 1 when the trigger monitoring unit 506 detects a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 at the terminal CLK. The trigger monitoring unit 506 can turn off the switch Q27 in response to the turn-off operation of the power switch 304. The D/A converter 528 can adjust the voltage of the reference signal REF from a first level to a second level in response to the change of the counter value. Therefore, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted in accordance with the adjusted reference signal REF when the power switch 304 is turned on.

[0068] If the burst dimming mode is selected, the switch 540 is turned off and the switches 541 and 542 are turned on. The inverting input of the comparator 534 receives a reference signal REF1 having a predetermined voltage. The control switch Q16 is controlled by both of the SR flip-flop 522 and the PWM signal PWM1 through the AND gate 524. The reference signal REF1 can determine a peak value of the LED current, which can in turn determine a maximum light output of the LED string 312. The duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 can determine the on/off time of the control switch Q16. When the PWM signal PWM1 is logic 1, the conductance status of the control switch Q16 is determined by the Q output of the SR flip-flop 522. When the PWM signal PWM1 is logic 0, the control switch Q16 is turned off. By adjusting the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1, the power of the LED string 312 can be adjusted accordingly. As such, the combination of the reference signal REF1 and the PWM signal PWM1 can determine the light output of the LED string 312.

[0069] In the burst dimming mode, when the power switch 304 is turned off, a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 can be detected by the trigger monitoring unit 506 at the terminal CLK. The trigger monitoring unit 506 turns off the switch Q27 and generates a driving signal. The counter value of the counter 526 can be increased, e.g., by 1, in response of the driving signal. The D/A converter 528 can generate the control signal 538 to adjust the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 from a first level to a second level. Therefore, when the power switch 304 is turned on next time, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted to follow a target light output which is determined by the reference signal REF1 and the PWM signal PWM1.

[0070] FIG. 6 illustrates examples of signal waveforms of an LED current 602 flowing through the LED string 312, the pulse signal 536, V522 which indicates the output of the SR flip-flop 522, V524 which indicates the output of the AND gate 524, and the ON/OFF status of the control switch Q16 in the analog dimming mode. FIG. 6 is described in combination with FIG. 4 and FIG. 5.

[0071] In operation, the pulse signal generator 504 generates pulse signal 536. The SR flip-flop 522 generates a digital 1 at the Q output in response to each pulse of the pulse signal 536. The control switch Q16 is turned on when the Q output of the SR flip-flop 522 is digital 1. When the control switch Q16 is turned on, the inductor L1 ramps up and the LED current 602 increases. When the LED current 602 reaches the peak value I_{max} , which means the voltage of the current monitoring signal SEN is substantially equal to the voltage of the reference signal REF, the comparator 534 generates a digital 1 at the R input of the SR flip-flop 522 so that the SR flip-flop 522 generates a digital 0 at the Q output. The control switch Q16 is turned off when the Q output of the SR flip-flop 522 is digital 0. When the control switch Q16 is turned off, the inductor L1 is discharged to power the LED string 312 and the LED current 602 decreases. In this analog dimming mode, by adjusting the reference signal REF, the average LED current can be adjusted accordingly and therefore the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted.

[0072] FIG. 7 illustrates examples of signal waveforms of the LED current 602 flowing through the LED string 312, the pulse signal 536, V522 which indicates the output of the SR flip-flop 522, V524 which indicates the output of the AND

gate 524, and the ON/OFF status of the control switch Q16, and the PMW signal PWM1 in the burst dimming mode. FIG. 7 is described in combination with FIG. 4 and FIG. 5.

[0073] When PWM1 is digital 1, the relationship among the LED current 602, the pulse signal 536, V522, V524, and the ON/OFF status of the switch Q1 is similar to that is illustrated in FIG. 6. When PWM1 is digital 0, the output of the AND gate 524 turns to digital 0. Therefore, the control switch Q16 is turned off and the LED current 602 decreases. If the PWM1 holds digital 0 long enough, the LED current 602 can falls to zero. In this burst dimming mode, by adjusting the duty cycle of PWM1, the average LED current can be adjusted accordingly and therefore the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted.

[0074] FIG. 8 shows an example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller in FIG. 5, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 8 is described in combination with FIG. 5.

[0075] In the example shown in FIG. 8, each time when a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 is detected by the trigger monitoring unit 506, the counter value of the counter 526 is increases by 1. The counter 526 can be a 2-bit counter which has a maximum counter value of 3.

[0076] In the analog dimming mode, the D/A converter 528 reads the counter value from the counter 526 and decreases the voltage of the reference signal REF in response to an increase of the counter value. The voltage of REF can determine a peak value I_{max} of the LED current, which can in turn determine an average value of the LED current. In the burst dimming mode, the D/A converter 528 reads the counter value from the counter 526 and decreases the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 (e.g., decreases 25% each time) in response to an increase of the counter value. The counter 526 is reset after it reaches its maximum counter value (e.g., 3).

[0077] FIG. 9 shows a flowchart 900 of a method for adjusting power of a light source, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 9 is described in combination with FIG. 4 and FIG. 5.

[0078] In block 902, a light source, e.g., the LED string 312, is powered by a regulated power from a power converter, e.g., the power converter 310. In block 904, a switch monitoring signal can be received, e.g., by the dimming controller 308. The switch monitoring signal can indicate an operation of a power switch, e.g., the power switch 304 coupled between a power source and the power converter. In block 906, a dimming signal is generated according to the switch monitoring signal. In block 908, a switch coupled in series with the light source, e.g., the control switch Q16, is controlled according to the dimming signal so as to adjust the regulated power from the power converter. In one embodiment, in an analog dimming mode, the regulated power from the power converter can be adjusted by comparing the dimming signal with a feedback current monitoring signal which indicates a light source current of the light source. In another embodiment, in a burst dimming mode, the regulated power from the power converter can be adjusted by controlling a duty cycle of a PWM signal by the dimming signal.

[0079] Accordingly, embodiments in accordance with the present invention provide a light source driving circuit that can adjust power of a light source according to a switch monitoring signal indicative of an operation of a power switch, e.g., an on/off switch mounted on the wall. The power of the light source, which is provided by a power converter, can be adjusted by a dimming controller by controlling a switch coupled in series with the light source. Advantageously, as described above, users can adjust the light output of the light source through an operation (e.g., a turn-off operation) of a common on/off power switch. Therefore, extra apparatus for dimming, such as an external dimmer or a specially designed switch with adjusting buttons, can be avoided and the cost can be reduced.

[0080] FIG. 10 shows an example of a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit 1000, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 10 is described in combination with FIG. 3. Elements labeled the same as in FIG. 3 and FIG. 4 have similar functions.

[0081] The light source driving circuit 1000 includes a power converter 310 coupled to a power source and an LED string 312 for receiving power from the power source and for providing a regulated power to the LED string 312. A dimming controller 1008 is operable for monitoring a power switch 304 coupled between the power source and the light source driving circuit 1000 by monitoring the voltage at a terminal CLK. The dimming controller 1008 is operable for receiving a dimming request signal indicative of a first set of operations of the power switch 304 and for receiving a dimming termination signal indicative of a second set of operations of the power switch 304. The dimming controller 1008 can receive the dimming request signal and the dimming termination signal via the terminal CLK. The dimming controller 1008 is further operable for continuously adjusting the regulated power from the power converter 310 if the dimming request signal is received, and for stopping adjusting the regulated power from the power converter 310 if the dimming termination signal is received. In other words, the dimming controller 1008 can continuously adjust the power from the power converter 310 upon detection of the first set of operations of the power switch 304 until the second set of operations of the power switch 304 are detected. In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1008 can adjust the regulated power from the power converter 310 by controlling a control switch Q16 coupled in series with the LED string 312.

[0082] FIG. 11 shows an example of a structure of the dimming controller 1008 in FIG. 10, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 11 is described in combination with FIG. 10. Elements labeled the same as

in FIG. 4, FIG. 5 and FIG. 10 have similar functions.

[0083] In the example of FIG. 11, the structure of the dimming controller 1008 in FIG. 11 is similar to the structure of the dimming controller 308 in FIG. 5 except for the configuration of the dimmer 1102 and the trigger monitoring unit 1106. In FIG. 11, the trigger monitoring unit 1106 is operable for receiving the dimming request signal and the dimming termination signal via the terminal CLK, and for generating a signal EN to enable or disable a clock generator 1104. The trigger monitoring unit 1106 is further operable for controlling a conductance status of the switch Q27 coupled to the LED string 312.

[0084] The dimmer 1102 is operable for generating a reference signal REF to adjust power of the LED string 312 in an analog dimming mode, or generating a control signal 538 for adjusting a duty cycle of a PWM signal PWM1 to adjust the power of the LED string 312 in a burst dimming mode. In the example shown in FIG. 11, the dimmer 1102 can include the clock generator 1104 coupled to the trigger monitoring unit 1106 for generating a clock signal, a counter 1126 driven by the clock signal, an digital-to-analog (D/A) converter 528 coupled to the counter 1126. The dimmer 1102 can further include a PWM generator 530 coupled to the D/A converter 528.

[0085] In operation, when the power switch 304 is turned on or turned off, the trigger monitoring unit 1106 can detect a positive edge or a negative edge of the voltage at the terminal CLK. For example, when the power switch 304 is turned off, the capacitor C10 is discharged to power the dimming controller 1108. A voltage across the resistor R6 drops to zero. Therefore, a negative edge of the voltage at the terminal CLK can be detected by the trigger monitoring unit 1106. Similarly, when the power switch 304 is turned on, the voltage across the resistor R6 rises to a predetermined voltage. Therefore, a positive edge of the voltage at the terminal CLK can be detected by the trigger monitoring unit 1106. As such, operations, e.g., turn-on operations or turn-off operations, of the power switch 304 can be detected by the trigger monitoring unit 1106 by monitoring the voltage at the terminal CLK.

[0086] In one embodiment, a dimming request signal can be received by the trigger monitoring unit 1106 via the terminal CLK when a first set of operations of the power switch 304 are detected. A dimming termination signal can be received by the trigger monitoring unit 1106 via the terminal CLK when a second set of operations of the power switch 304 are detected. In one embodiment, the first set of operations of the power switch 304 includes a first turn-off operation followed by a first turn-on operation. In one embodiment, the second set of operations of the power switch 304 includes a second turn-off operation followed by a second turn-on operation.

[0087] If the dimming request signal is received by the trigger monitoring unit 1106, the dimming controller 1108 begins to continuously adjust the regulated power from the power converter 310. In an analog dimming mode, the dimming controller 1108 adjusts a voltage of a reference signal REF to adjust the regulated power from the power converter 310. In a burst dimming mode, the dimming controller 1108 adjusts a duty cycle of a PWM signal PWM1 to adjust the regulated power from the power converter 310.

[0088] If the dimming termination signal is received by the trigger monitoring unit 1106, the dimming controller 1008 can stop adjusting the regulated power from the power converter 310.

[0089] FIG. 12 illustrates an example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller 1008 in FIG. 11, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 12 is described in combination with FIG. 10 and FIG. 11.

[0090] Assume that initially the power switch 304 is off. In operation, when the power switch 304 is turned on, e.g., by a user, the LED string 312 is powered by a regulated power from the power converter 310 to generate an initial light output, in one embodiment. In the analog dimming mode, the initial light output can be determined by an initial voltage of the reference signal REF. In the burst dimming mode, the initial light output can be determined by an initial duty cycle (e.g., 100%) of the PWM signal PWM1. The reference signal REF and the PWM signal PWM1 can be generated by the D/A converter 528 according to a counter value of the counter 1126, in one embodiment. Therefore, the initial voltage of REF and the initial duty cycle of PWM1 can be determined by an initial counter value (e.g., zero) provided by the counter 1126.

[0091] In order to adjust the light output of the LED string 312, the user can apply a first set of operations to the power switch 304. A dimming request signal is generated upon detection of the first set of operations of the power switch 304. In one embodiment, the first set of operations can include a first turn-off operation followed by a first turn-on operation. As a result, a dimming request signal including a negative edge 1204 followed by a positive edge 1206 of the voltage at the terminal CLK can be detected and received by the trigger monitoring unit 1106. In response to the dimming request signal, the trigger monitoring unit 1106 can generate a signal EN having a high level. Thus, the clock generator 1104 is enabled to generate a clock signal. The counter 1126 driven by the clock signal can change the counter value in response to each clock pulse of the clock signal. In the example of FIG. 12, the counter value increases in response to the clock signal. In one embodiment, the counter value can be reset to zero after the counter 1126 reaches its predetermined maximum counter value. In another embodiment, the counter value increases until the counter 1126 reaches its predetermined maximum counter value, and then decreases until the counter 1126 reaches its predetermined minimum counter value.

[0092] In the analog dimming mode, the D/A converter 528 reads the counter value from the counter 1126 and decreases

the voltage of the reference signal REF in response to an increase of the counter value, in one embodiment. In the burst dimming mode, the D/A converter 528 reads the counter value from the counter 1126 and decreases the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 (e.g., decreases 10% each time) in response to an increase of the counter value, in one embodiment. Accordingly, the light output of the LED string 312 can be adjusted because the regulated power from the power converter 310 can be determined by the voltage of the reference signal REF (in the analog dimming mode) or by the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 (in the burst dimming mode).

[0093] Once a desired light output has been achieved, the user can terminate the adjustment process by applying a second set of operations to the power switch 304. A dimming termination signal is generated upon detection of the second set of operations of the power switch 304. In one embodiment, the second set of operations can include a second turn-off operation followed by a second turn-on operation. As a result, the dimming termination signal including a negative edge 1208 followed by a positive edge 1210 of the voltage at the terminal CLK can be detected and received by the trigger monitoring unit 1106. Upon detection of the dimming termination signal, the trigger monitoring unit 1106 can generate the signal EN having a low level. Thus, the clock generator 1104 is disabled, such that the counter 1126 can hold its counter value. Accordingly, in the analog dimming mode, the voltage of the reference signal REF can be held at a desired level. In the burst dimming mode, the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 can be held at a desired value. Therefore, the light output of the LED string 312 can be maintained at a desired light output.

[0094] FIG. 13 shows a flowchart 1300 of a method for adjusting power of a light source, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 13 is described in combination with FIG. 10 and FIG. 11.

[0095] In block 1302, a light source, e.g., the LED string 312, is powered by a regulated power from a power converter, e.g., the power converter 310.

[0096] In block 1304, a dimming request signal can be received, e.g., by the dimming controller 1108. The dimming request signal can indicate a first set of operations of a power switch, e.g., the power switch 304 coupled between a power source and the power converter. In one embodiment, the first set of operations of the power switch includes a first turn-off operation followed by a first turn-on operation.

[0097] In block 1306, the regulated power from the power converter is continuously adjusted, e.g., by the dimming controller 1108. In one embodiment, a clock generator 1104 can be enabled to drive a counter 1126. A dimming signal (e.g., control signal 538 or reference signal REF) can be generated according to the counter value of the counter 1126. In an analog dimming mode, the regulated power from the power converter can be adjusted by comparing the reference signal REF with a feedback current monitoring signal which indicates a light source current of the light source. The voltage of REF can be determined by the counter value. In a burst dimming mode, the regulated power from the power converter can be adjusted by varying a duty cycle of a PWM signal PWM1 by the control signal 538. The duty cycle of PWM1 can be also determined by the counter value.

[0098] In block 1308, a dimming termination signal can be received, e.g., by the dimming controller 1108. The dimming termination signal can indicate a second set of operations of a power switch, e.g., the power switch 304 coupled between a power source and the power converter. In one embodiment, the second set of operations of the power switch includes a second turn-off operation followed by a second turn-on operation.

[0099] In block 1310, the adjustment of the regulated power from the power converter is terminated if the dimming termination signal is received. In one embodiment, the clock generator 1104 is disabled such that the counter 1126 can hold its counter value. As a result, in the analog dimming mode, the voltage of REF can be held at a desired level. In the burst dimming mode, the duty cycle of the PWM signal PWM1 can be held at a desired value. Consequently, the light source can maintain a desired light output.

[0100] FIG. 14A shows an example of a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit 1400, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. Elements labeled the same as in FIG. 3 and FIG. 4 have similar functions. FIG. 14A is described in combination with FIG. 4. The light source driving circuit 1400 is coupled to a power source V_{IN} (e.g., 110/120 Volt AC, 60Hz) via a power switch 304 and is coupled to an LED light source 312. Referring to FIG. 14B, an example of the power switch 304 in FIG. 14A is illustrated according to one embodiment of the present invention. In one embodiment, the power switch 304 is an on/off switch mounted on the wall. By switching an element 1480 to an ON place or an OFF place, the conductance status of the power switch 304 is controlled on or off, e.g., by a user.

[0101] Referring back to FIG. 14A, the light source driving circuit 1400 includes an AC/DC converter 306, a power converter 310, and a dimming controller 1408. The AC/DC converter 306 converts an input AC voltage V_{IN} to an output DC voltage V_{OUT} . In the example of FIG. 14A, the AC/DC converter 306 includes a bridge rectifier including diodes D1, D2, D7 and D8. The power converter 310 coupled to the AC/DC converter 306 receives the output DC voltage V_{OUT} and provides output power to the LED light source 312. The dimming controller 1408 coupled to the AC/DC converter 306 and coupled to the power converter 310 is operable for monitoring the power switch 304, and for regulating the output power of the power converter 310 according to operations of the power switch 304 so as to control brightness of light emitted from the LED light source 312.

[0102] In one embodiment, the power converter 310 includes an inductor L1, a diode D4, a switch Q27, a control switch Q16, and a current sensor R5. The dimming controller 1408 includes multiple terminals, such as a terminal HV_

GATE, a terminal CLK, a terminal VDD, a terminal GND, a terminal CTRL, a terminal RT and a terminal MON. The terminals of the dimming controller 1408 operate similarly as the corresponding terminals of the dimming controller 308 described in relation to FIG. 4.

[0103] During operation, the dimming controller 1408 monitors the power switch 304 by receiving a switch monitoring signal 1450 at the terminal CLK. The switch monitoring signal 1450 indicates a conductance status, e.g., ON/OFF status, of the power switch 304. Accordingly, the dimming controller 1408 controls the switch Q27 through the terminal HV_GATE and controls the control switch Q16 through the terminal CTRL, so as to control the dimming of the LED light source 312.

[0104] More specifically, in one embodiment, when the power switch 304 is turned on, the dimming controller 1408 generates a signal, e.g., logic high, at the terminal HV_GATE to turn the switch Q27 on, and generates a switch control signal 1452 at the terminal CTRL to turn the control switch Q16 on and off. In one embodiment, the control switch Q16 operates in a switch-on state and a switch-off state. During the switch-on state of the control switch Q16, the switch control signal 1452 alternately turns the control switch Q16 on and off. For example, the dimming controller 1408 periodically turns on the control switch Q16. In addition, the dimming controller 1408 receives a sensing signal 1454 via the terminal MON indicating the current I_{LED} through the LED light source 312, and turns off the control switch Q16 if the sensing signal 1454 indicates that the current I_{LED} reaches a current threshold I_{TH} . Thus, the current I_{LED} ramps up when the control switch Q16 is turned on and ramps down when the control switch Q16 is turned off. In this way, the dimming controller 1408 determines a peak level of the current I_{LED} , such that an average level $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the current I_{LED} is controlled. During the switch-off state of the control switch Q16, the switch control signal 1452 maintains the control switch Q16 off to cut off the current I_{LED} . In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1408 determines a time ratio of the switch-on state to the switch-off state to control the average level $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the current I_{LED} .

[0105] When the power switch 304 is turned off, the dimming controller 1408 generates a signal, e.g., logic low, at the terminal HV_GATE to turn off the switch Q27, in one embodiment. As such, the current I_{LED} flowing through the LED light source 312 drops to substantially zero ampere to cut off the LED light source 312.

[0106] In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1408 receives the switch monitoring signal 1450 indicating a conductance status of the power switch 304 at the terminal CLK. Accordingly, the dimming controller 1408 is able to identify an operation of the power switch 304 and provide a dimming request signal indicating the operation of the power switch 304. In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1408 provides a dimming request signal if a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 is identified. Alternatively, the dimming controller 1408 provides a dimming request signal if a turn-on operation of the power switch 304 is identified. In response, the dimming controller 1408 operates in an analog dimming mode, a burst dimming mode, or a combination mode to adjust the on/off state of the control switch Q16 to control the dimming of the LED light source 312, in one embodiment. For example, in the analog dimming mode, the peak level of the current I_{LED} is determined by the dimming controller 1408 while the time ratio of the switch-on state to the switch-off state remains at the same level. In the burst dimming mode, the time ratio of the switch-on state to the switch-off state is determined by the dimming controller 1408 while the peak level of the current I_{LED} remains at the same level. In the combination mode, both the peak level of the current I_{LED} and the time ratio of the switch-on state to the switch-off state are determined by the dimming controller 1408. Thus, when the switch Q27 is turned on again (indicating the power switch 304 is turned on again), the peak level of the current I_{LED} and/or the time durations of the switch-on state and the switch-off state are adjusted. As a result, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ flowing through the LED light source 312 is adjusted to control the brightness of the LED light source 312.

[0107] Advantageously, by adjusting both the peak level of the current I_{LED} and the durations of the switch-on state and the switch-off state, the dimming controller 1408 is able to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ in a relatively wide range. For example, if I_{MAX} is a maximum level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$, $I_{AVERAGE}$ can vary in a range of $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ in accordance with one embodiment, compared to a range of $20\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ in conventional art. Consequently, a wider range dimming for the LED light source 312 is achieved, which is beneficial for energy-efficient light applications, for example, night lighting.

[0108] FIG. 15 shows an example of a structure of the dimming controller 1408 in FIG. 14A, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 15 is described in combination with FIG. 5-FIG. 7 and FIG. 14A. Elements labeled the same as in FIG. 5 and FIG. 14A have similar functions.

[0109] In the example of FIG. 15, the dimming controller 1408 includes a start-up and UVL circuit 508, a pulse signal generator 504, a trigger monitoring unit 506, a dimmer 1502, a comparator 534, an SR flip-flop 522, and an AND gate 524. The dimmer 1502 includes a reference signal generator 1506 for generating a reference signal REF and further includes a PWM generator 1508 for generating a pulse-width modulation signal PWM1. As described in relation to FIG. 5, the comparator 534 compares the sensing signal 1454 with the reference signal REF to generate a comparing signal COMP. The pulse signal generator 504 generates a pulse signal 536 having a waveform of periodical pulses. In one embodiment, the SR flip-flop 522 sets the pulse signal V_{522} to digital one when the pulse signal 536 is digital one and resets the pulse signal V_{522} to digital zero when the comparing signal COMP is digital one (e.g., when the sensing signal 1454 reaches the reference signal REF). The AND gate 524 receives the pulse signal V_{522} and the pulse-width modulation

signal PWM1, and generates the switch control signal 1452 accordingly to control the control switch Q16.

[0110] Assuming that the switch Q27 is turned on, the dimming controller 1408 controls the current I_{LED} in a similar way as the dimming controller 308 described in relation to FIG. 6 and FIG. 7. During a first state of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 (e.g., PWM1 is digital one), the AND gate 524 alternately turns on and off the control switch Q16 according to the pulse signal V_{522} , in one embodiment. As such, the control switch Q16 operates in the switch-on state, in which the current I_{LED} ramps up when the control switch Q16 is turned on and ramps down when the control switch Q16 is turned off. The reference signal REF determines a peak level of the current I_{LED} by turning off the control switch Q16 when the sensing signal 1454 reaches the reference signal REF. During a second state of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 (e.g., PWM1 is digital zero), the AND gate 524 maintains the control switch Q16 to be off. As such, the control switch Q16 operates in the switch-off state to cut off the current I_{LED} .

[0111] Therefore, the reference signal REF is used to determine the peak level of the current I_{LED} , and the duty cycle of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 is used to determine the time ratio of the switch-on state to the switch-off state of the control switch Q16. In other words, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ through the LED light source 312 varies according to the reference signal REF and the duty cycle of the PWM1. For example, $I_{AVERAGE}$ is increased if the voltage V_{REF} of the reference signal REF is increased and is decreased if V_{REF} is decreased. Moreover, $I_{AVERAGE}$ is increased if the duty cycle D_{PWM1} of PWM1 is increased and is decreased if D_{PWM1} is decreased.

[0112] The dimmer 1502 further includes a counter 1504 for providing a counter value. In one embodiment, the reference signal generator 1506 coupled to the counter 1504 determines the voltage level V_{REF} based upon the counter value VALUE_1504 of the counter 1504. The PWM generator 1508 coupled to the counter 1504 determines the duty cycle D_{PWM1} based upon the counter value VALUE_1504.

TABLE 1

VALUE_1504	0	1	2	3
V_{REF}	V_{MAX}	$50\% * V_{MAX}$	$20\% * V_{MAX}$	$20\% * V_{MAX}$
D_{PWM1}	100%	100%	100%	20%

TABLE 2

VALUE_1504	0	1	2	3
V_{REF}	V_{MAX}	$50\% * V_{MAX}$	$30\% * V_{MAX}$	$20\% * V_{MAX}$
D_{PWM1}	100%	60%	40%	20%

[0113] Table 1 and Table 2 show examples of the counter value VALUE_1504 of the counter 1504 versus the voltage V_{REF} and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} . In one embodiment, the counter 1504 is a 2-bit counter, and thus the counter value can be 0, 1, 2 or 3. V_{MAX} represents a maximum voltage level of the reference signal REF. According to Table 1, when the counter value VALUE_1504 is 0, 1, 2 and 3, the reference signal REF has levels V_{MAX} , $50\% * V_{MAX}$, $20\% * V_{MAX}$ and $20\% * V_{MAX}$, respectively, and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} has values 100%, 100%, 100% and 20%, respectively. According to Table 2, when the counter value VALUE_1504 is 0, 1, 2 and 3, the reference signal REF has levels V_{MAX} , $50\% * V_{MAX}$, $30\% * V_{MAX}$ and $20\% * V_{MAX}$, respectively, and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} has values 100%, 60%, 40% and 20%, respectively. The counter value, the reference signal REF and the duty cycle of PWM1 can have other relationships, and are not limited to the examples in Table 1 and Table 2.

[0114] If a dimming request signal, e.g., indicating a turn-off operation of the power switch 304, is received, the trigger monitoring unit 506 generates an enable signal 1510, in one embodiment. The counter 1504 receives the enable signal 1510 and increases or decreases the counter value accordingly. As such, the reference signal generator 1506 determines the reference signal REF, e.g., according to Table 1 or Table 2. The PWM generator 1508 determines the duty cycle of PWM1, e.g., according to Table 1 or Table 2.

[0115] As a result, the dimming controller 1408 selectively operates in an analog dimming mode, a burst dimming mode, and a combination mode. In the analog dimming mode, the level of the reference signal REF is determined by the counter value of the counter 1504 to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ while the duty cycle D_{PWM1} of PWM1 remains at the same level, in one embodiment. In the burst dimming mode, the duty cycle D_{PWM1} of PWM1 is determined by the counter value of the counter 1504 to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ while the reference signal REF remains at the same level, in one embodiment. In the combination mode, both the level of the reference signal REF and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} are determined according to the counter value of the counter 1504. Therefore, the brightness of the LED light source 302 is adjusted. The operations of the dimming controller 1408 are further described in relation to FIG. 16

and FIG. 17. The dimming controller 1408 can have other configurations and is not limited to the example shown in FIG. 15.

[0116] FIG. 16 illustrates an example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller 1408 in FIG. 15, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 16 is described in combination with FIG. 14A and FIG. 15. FIG. 16 shows the voltage V_{CLK} at the terminal CLK, the counter value VALUE_1504 of the counter 1504, the voltage V_{PWM1} of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, the duty cycle D_{PWM1} of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, the voltage V_{REF} of the reference signal REF, the voltage V_{SENSE} of the sensing signal 1454, and the average level $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the current I_{LED} . In the example of FIG. 16, the dimming controller 1408 sets the voltage V_{REF} and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} according to the example presented in Table 1.

[0117] At time t_0 , the power switch 304 is off. The counter value VALUE_1504 is 0. Based upon Table 1, the duty cycle D_{PWM1} is 100% and the voltage V_{REF} has the maximum level V_{MAX} . Since the power switch 304 and the switch Q27 are both turned off, the current I_{LED} is cut off and thus the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is zero.

[0118] At time t_1 , the voltage V_{CLK} has a rising edge indicating a turn-on operation of the power switch 304. The dimming controller 1408 turns on the switch Q27, and thus the current I_{LED} is controlled according to the conductance status of the control switch Q16. Between t_1 and t_2 , the duty cycle D_{PWM1} is 100% and the voltage V_{REF} has the maximum level V_{MAX} . The control switch Q16 operates in the switch-on state to be alternately on and off. As shown in FIG. 16, the voltage V_{SENSE} ramps up when the control switch Q16 is on and ramps down when the control switch Q16 is off. Since the peak level of the voltage V_{SENSE} is equal to the maximum level V_{MAX} of the reference signal REF, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ has a maximum level I_{MAX} .

[0119] At time t_2 , the voltage V_{CLK} has a falling edge indicating a turn-off operation of the power switch 304. The switch Q27 is turned off to cut off the current I_{LED} . Thus, between t_2 and t_3 , the voltage V_{SENSE} drops to substantially zero volt and the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ drops to substantially zero ampere.

[0120] In one embodiment, upon detection of a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 at time t_2 , a dimming request signal is generated. The counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 0 to 1. Based upon the example in Table 1, the dimming controller 1408 is switched to an analog dimming mode to adjust the voltage V_{REF} to $50\% \cdot V_{MAX}$ and maintains the duty cycle D_{PWM1} at 100%.

[0121] At time t_3 , the switch Q27 is turned on again. Thus, during the time interval between t_3 and t_4 , the dimming controller 1408 switches the control switch Q16 on and off according to the reference signal REF and the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1. Thus, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is adjusted to $50\% \cdot I_{MAX}$.

[0122] At time t_4 , the voltage V_{CLK} has a falling edge indicating a turn-off operation of the power switch 304. The counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 1 to 2. Based upon Table 1, the dimming controller 1408 is in the analog dimming mode to adjust the voltage V_{REF} to $20\% \cdot V_{MAX}$ and maintain the duty cycle D_{PWM1} at 100%. Thus, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is adjusted to $20\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ between t_5 and t_6 .

[0123] At time t_6 , a falling edge of the voltage V_{CLK} indicates a turn-off operation of the power switch 304. In response, the counter value is increased from 2 to 3. Based upon Table 1, the dimming controller 1408 is switched to a burst dimming mode to maintain the voltage V_{REF} at $20\% \cdot V_{MAX}$ and decrease the duty cycle D_{PWM1} to 20%. As such, when the power switch 304 is turned on during a time interval between t_7 and t_8 , the voltage V_{SENSE} ramps up and down when the voltage V_{PWM1} has a first state, e.g., logic high, and drops to substantially zero volt when the voltage V_{PWM1} has a second state, e.g., logic low. As such, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is adjusted to $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ between t_7 and t_8 .

[0124] Therefore, in the example of FIG. 16, the dimming controller 1408 initially operates in the analog dimming mode to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ from $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $20\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ and then operates in the burst dimming mode to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ from $20\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. Advantageously, both the duty cycle D_{PWM1} and the voltage V_{REF} are adjusted to achieve the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ in a range of $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. Thus, the dimming of the LED light source 312 is achieved in a wider range. Moreover, during the relatively wide range of dimming, the voltage V_{REF} is maintained greater than a voltage threshold (e.g., $15\% \cdot V_{MAX}$) and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} is maintained greater than a duty cycle threshold (e.g., 10%). As such, the accuracy of the reference signal REF and the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 is not affected by undesirable conditions such as noises, which improves the dimming accuracy of the light source driving circuit 1400.

[0125] FIG. 17 illustrates another example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller 1408 in FIG. 15, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 17 is described in combination with FIG. 14A - FIG. 16. FIG. 17 shows the voltage V_{CLK} at the terminal CLK, the counter value VALUE_1504 of the counter 1504, the voltage V_{PWM1} of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, the duty cycle D_{PWM1} of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, the voltage V_{REF} of the reference signal REF, the voltage V_{SENSE} of the sensing signal 1454, and the average level $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the current I_{LED} . In the example of FIG. 17, the dimming controller 1408 sets the voltage V_{REF} and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} according to the example presented in Table 2.

[0126] Between t_0' and t_2' , the dimming controller 1408 operates similarly to the operation between t_0 and t_2 as described in relation to FIG. 16. For example, the counter value VALUE_1504 is 0 between t_0' and t_2' . Based upon Table 2, the duty cycle D_{PWM1} is 100% and the voltage V_{REF} has the maximum level V_{MAX} . Thus, between t_1' and t_2' , the peak level of the voltage V_{SENSE} is equal to the maximum level V_{MAX} of the reference signal REF and the average

current $I_{AVERAGE}$ has a maximum level I_{MAX} .

[0127] At time t_2' , a falling edge of the voltage V_{CLK} indicates a turn-off operation of the power switch 304. The switch Q27 is turned off to cut off the current I_{LED} . Thus, between t_2' and t_3' , the voltage V_{SENSE} drops to substantially zero volt and the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ drops to substantially zero ampere.

[0128] In one embodiment, upon detection the turn-off operation of the power switch 304 at time t_2' , a dimming request signal is generated. The counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 0 to 1. Based upon the example in Table 2, the dimming controller 1408 operates in the combination mode to adjust the voltage V_{REF} to $50\% \cdot V_{MAX}$ and adjust the duty cycle D_{PWM1} to 60%. Therefore, between t_3' and t_4' , the control switch Q16 operates in the switch-on state to alternately on and off according to the pulse signal V_{522} when the voltage V_{PWM1} has a first state, e.g., logic high. The peak level of the voltage V_{SENSE} is equal to the voltage V_{REF} , that is, $50\% \cdot V_{MAX}$. Moreover, the control switch Q16 operates in the switch-off state to cut off the current I_{LED} when the voltage V_{PWM1} has a second state, e.g., logic low. Thus, the average level of the current I_{LED} is equal to $30\% \cdot I_{MAX}$.

[0129] At time t_4' , a falling edge of the voltage V_{CLK} indicates a turn-off operation of the power switch 304, and thus a dimming request signal is generated. In response, the counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 1 to 2. Based upon the example in Table 2, the dimming controller 1408 operates in the combination mode to adjust the voltage V_{REF} to $30\% \cdot V_{MAX}$ and adjust the duty cycle D_{PWM1} to 40%. Consequently, the average level of the current I_{LED} is equal to $12\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ between t_5' and t_6' .

[0130] At time t_6' , a falling edge of the voltage V_{CLK} indicates a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 and thus a dimming request signal is generated. In response, the counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 2 to 3. Based upon the example in Table 2, the dimming controller 1408 operates in the combination mode to adjust the voltage V_{REF} to $20\% \cdot V_{MAX}$ and adjust the duty cycle D_{PWM1} to 20%. Consequently, the average level of the current I_{LED} is equal to $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ between t_7' and t_8' .

[0131] Therefore, between t_1' and t_7' , the dimming controller operates in the combination mode when the counter value VALUE_1504 is changed. Advantageously, both the duty cycle D_{PWM1} and the voltage V_{REF} are adjusted to achieve the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ in a range of $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. The dimming of the LED light source 302 are achieved in a wider dimming range. Moreover, during the relatively wide range of dimming, the voltage V_{REF} is maintained greater than a voltage threshold (e.g., $15\% \cdot V_{MAX}$) and the duty cycle D_{PWM1} is maintained greater than a duty cycle threshold (e.g., 10%). As such, the accuracy of the reference signal REF and the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 is not affected by undesirable conditions such as noises, which improves the dimming accuracy of the light source driving circuit 1400.

[0132] FIG. 18 shows a flowchart 1800 of a method for controlling dimming of an LED light source, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 18 is described in combination with FIG. 14A-FIG. 17. Although specific steps are disclosed in FIG. 18, such steps are examples. That is, the present invention is well suited to performing various other steps or variations of the steps recited in FIG. 18.

[0133] In block 1802, a sensing signal, e.g., the sensing signal 1454, indicative of a current flowing through the LED light source, e.g., I_{LED} , is compared to a reference signal, e.g., the reference signal REF, to provide a pulse signal, e.g., the pulse signal V_{522} . In block 1804, the current through the LED light source is controlled according to the pulse signal during a first state of a pulse-width modulation signal, e.g., PWM1. In block 1806, the current through the LED light source is cut off during a second state of a pulse-width modulation signal.

[0134] In block 1808, both a level of the reference signal and the duty cycle of the pulse-width modulation signal are adjusted based upon a dimming request signal. In one embodiment, a counter value of a counter is adjusted according to the dimming request signal. The level of the reference signal and the duty cycle of the pulse-width modulation signal are determined according to the counter value. If the counter value is changed from a first value to a second value, a first mode (e.g., an analog dimming mode), a second mode (e.g., a burst dimming mode), or a third mode (e.g., a combination mode) is selected.

In the first mode, the level of the reference signal is adjusted and the duty cycle of the pulse-width modulation signal is maintained. In the second mode, the level of the reference signal is maintained and the duty cycle of the pulse-width modulation signal is adjusted. In the third mode, both the level of the reference signal and the duty cycle of the pulse-width modulation signal are adjusted.

[0135] FIG. 19 shows an example of a schematic diagram of a light source driving circuit 1900, in an embodiment according to the present invention. Elements labeled the same as in FIG. 3 and FIG. 4 have similar functions. FIG. 19 is described in combination with FIG. 3 and FIG. 4. The light source driving circuit 1900 is coupled to a power source V_{IN} (e.g., 110/120 Volt AC, 60Hz) via a power switch 304 and is coupled to an LED light source 312. As described in relation to FIG. 14B, the power switch 304 is an on/off switch mounted on the wall, and the power switch 304 is controlled on or off, e.g., by a user, in one embodiment.

[0136] The light source driving circuit 1900 includes an AC/DC converter 306, a power converter 310, and a dimming controller 1908. The AC/DC converter 306 converts an input AC voltage V_{IN} to an output DC voltage V_{OUT} . In the example of FIG. 19, the AC/DC converter 306 includes a bridge rectifier having diodes D1, D2, D7 and D8, and includes a filter

having a diode D10 and a capacitor C9. The power converter 310 is coupled to the AC/DC converter 306, receives the output DC voltage V_{OUT} , and provides output power to the LED light source 312. In one embodiment, the power converter 310 includes an inductor L1, a diode D4, a switch Q27, a control switch Q16, and a current sensor R5. The dimming controller 1908 is coupled to the AC/DC converter 306 and the power converter 310. The dimming controller 1908 is operable for monitoring operations of the power switch 304, e.g., a turn-on operation and/or a turn-off operation, and for controlling the output power delivered to the LED light source 312 accordingly, to control the dimming of the LED light source 312. The dimming controller 1908 includes multiple terminals, such as a terminal HV_GATE, a terminal CLK, a terminal VDD, a terminal GND, a voltage control terminal CTRL, a terminal RT, a terminal MON and a current control terminal CS. The terminals VDD, GND, RT and MON operate similar to the corresponding terminals of the dimming controller 1408 shown in FIG. 14.

[0137] In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1908 receives a switch monitoring signal 1450 indicative of a conductance status, e.g., an ON/OFF status, of the power switch 304 at the terminal CLK. In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1908 controls the switch Q27 according to the switch monitoring signal 1450. More specifically, if the switch monitoring signal 1450 indicates that the power switch 304 is turned off, then the dimming controller 1908 generates a signal, e.g., logic low, at the terminal HV_GATE to turn off the switch Q27. As such, the current I_{LED} flowing through the LED light source 312 drops to substantially zero amperes to cut off the LED light source 312. If the switch monitoring signal 1450 indicates that the power switch 304 is turned on, then the dimming controller 1908 generates a signal, e.g., logic high, at the terminal HV_GATE to turn the switch Q27 on. Then, the dimming controller 1908 controls the current I_{LED} flowing through the LED light source 312 according to signals on the terminal CTRL and the terminal CS.

[0138] In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1908 detects a dimming request signal indicating an operation of the power switch 304 according to the switch monitoring signal 1450. In one embodiment, the dimming controller 1908 receives the dimming request signal if the switch monitoring signal 1450 indicates that the power switch 304 performs a turn-off operation. When the power switch 304 is turned on again, the dimming controller 1908 adjusts an average current flowing through the LED light source 312 in response to the dimming request signal, to adjust the brightness of the LED light source 312.

[0139] The dimming controller 1908 is capable of operating in a first mode and a second mode to adjust an average current of the LED light source 312. As described below, the current I_{LED} represents the current flowing through the LED light source 302. During operation in the first mode, the current I_{LED} is represented as the current I_{LED1} . During operation in the second mode, the current I_{LED} is represented as the current I_{LED2} .

[0140] When the dimming controller 1908 operates in the first mode, the voltage control terminal CTRL of the dimming controller 1908 provides a pulse signal 1952 to alternately operate the control switch Q16 in a first state, e.g., a switch-on state, and a second state, e.g., a switch-off state. Thus, the current I_{LED1} flows through the LED light source 312, and varies according to the status of the control switch Q16. In one embodiment, during the switch-on state of the switch Q16, the current I_{LED1} flows through the LED light source 312, the switch Q16, the resistor R5, and ground. Thus, the current I_{LED1} increases. During the switch-off state of the switch Q16, the current I_{LED1} flows through the LED light source 312 and the diode D4, and thereby decreases. Thus, the average current flowing through the LED light source 312 can be adjusted by controlling the control switch Q16 in an analog dimming mode, a burst dimming mode, and/or a combination dimming mode, in one embodiment, which is further described in relation to FIG. 20.

[0141] When the dimming controller 1908 operates in the second mode, the dimming controller 1908 provides a control signal 1954 at the voltage control terminal CTRL, e.g., a digital zero signal, which maintains the control switch Q16 in the switch-off state. Thus, the current I_{LED1} is cut off. Moreover, the dimming controller 1908 conducts the current I_{LED2} through the LED light source 312 and the current control terminal CS.

[0142] Advantageously, the dimming controller 1908 achieves a relatively wide range of dimming by selecting an operation mode from at least the first mode and the second mode. For example, if I_{MAX} indicates a maximum level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$, then the dimming controller 1908 can operate in the first mode to adjust the average level $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the current I_{LED1} ranging from $4\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ (by way of example). Moreover, the dimming controller 1908 is capable of operating in the second mode to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ to a lower level. For example, the dimming controller 1908 sets the current I_{LED2} to a constant level $1\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. In other words, the LED light source 312 in the second mode is adjusted to be darker than that in the first mode, which is beneficial for energy-efficient light applications such as, for example, night lighting. In addition, the current I_{LED2} in the second mode is at a substantially constant level, which does not vary according to turn-on and turn-off operations of the switch Q16. As such, the light emitted by the LED light source 312 is not interfered with by switching noise of the switch Q16, which enhances the lighting stability of the LED light source 312.

[0143] FIG. 20 shows an example of a structure of the dimming controller 1908 in FIG. 19, in an embodiment according to the present invention. FIG. 20 is described in combination with FIG. 15 and FIG. 19. Elements labeled the same as in FIG. 15 and FIG. 19 have similar functions. In the example of FIG. 20, the dimming controller 1908 includes a start-up and UVL circuit 508, a pulse signal generator 504, a trigger monitoring unit 506, a dimmer 2002, a driver 2010, a switch 2008 and a current source 2006.

[0144] In one embodiment, the switch monitoring signal 1450 can be received by the trigger monitoring unit 506 via the terminal CLK. The trigger monitoring unit 506 identifies the dimming request signal indicating a turn-off operation according to the switch monitoring signal 1450. If a dimming request signal is received, the trigger monitoring unit 506 generates an enable signal 1510.

[0145] The dimmer 2002 includes a counter 1504, a reference signal generator 1506, a PWM generator 1508, and a mode selection module 2004. The counter 1504 provides a counter value VALUE_1504 that varies in response to the enable signal 1510. In one embodiment, the counter 1504 increases the counter value VALUE_1504 in response to the enable signal 1510. Alternatively, the counter 1504 decreases the counter value VALUE_1504 in response to the enable signal 1510.

TABLE 3

VALUE_1504	0	1	2
I_{TARGET}	$100\% * I_{MAX}$	$30\% * I_{MAX}$	$1\% * I_{MAX}$
OPERATION MODE	FIRST MODE		SECOND MODE

TABLE 4

VALUE_1504	0	1	2
I_{TARGET}	$1\% * I_{MAX}$	$30\% * I_{MAX}$	$100\% * I_{MAX}$
OPERATION MODE	SECOND MODE	FIRST MODE	

[0146] The mode selection module 2004 selects an operation mode for the dimming controller 1908 from the first mode and the second mode according to the counter value VALUE_1504. In one embodiment, the counter value VALUE_1504 indicates a required brightness level of the LED light source 312. The required brightness level corresponds to a target level I_{TARGET} of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the LED light source 312. Referring to Table 3 and Table 4, examples of the counter value VALUE_1504 of the counter 1504 versus the target level I_{TARGET} and the operation mode of the dimming controller 1908 are shown. In the example of Table 3, the counter value VALUE_1504 can be 0, 1 and 2, respectively indicating the target levels $100\% * I_{MAX}$, $30\% * I_{MAX}$ and $1\% * I_{MAX}$, where I_{MAX} represents a maximum level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$. In the example of Table 4, the counter value VALUE_1504 can be 0, 1 and 2, respectively indicating the target levels $1\% * I_{MAX}$, $30\% * I_{MAX}$, $100\% * I_{MAX}$.

[0147] The mode selection module 2004 compares the counter value VALUE_1504 to a threshold to determine the selection of the operation modes. By way of example, the threshold is set to 1 according to the examples of Table 3 and Table 4. In Table 3, the mode selection module 2004 selects the first mode if the counter value VALUE_1504 is equal to or less than 1, and selects the second mode if the counter value VALUE_1504 is greater than 1. In Table 4, the mode selection module 2004 selects the first mode if the counter value VALUE_1504 is equal to or greater than 1, and selects the second mode if the counter value VALUE_1504 is less than 1. Therefore, in the embodiments shown in Table 3 and Table 4, the first mode is selected if the target level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is relatively high, e.g., I_{TARGET} is $30\% * I_{MAX}$ and $100\% * I_{MAX}$. Moreover, the second mode is selected if the target level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is relatively low, e.g., I_{TARGET} is $1\% * I_{MAX}$.

[0148] Upon the selection of the operation mode, the mode selection module 2004 controls the switch 2008, the reference signal generator 1506, and the PWM generator 1508 to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$. More specifically, in one embodiment, the current source 2006 generates a substantially constant current I_{LED2} . During operation in the first mode, the mode selection module 2004 turns off the switch 2008 to cut off the current I_{LED2} , controls the reference signal generator 1506 to generate a reference signal REF, and controls the PWM generator 1508 to generate a pulse width modulation signal PWM1. The reference signal REF and the pulse width modulation signal PWM1 are used by the driver 2010 to generate the pulse signal 1952 to control the switch Q16, in one embodiment.

[0149] In one embodiment, the driver 2010 includes a comparator 534, a SR flip-flop 522, and an AND gate 524. If the first mode is selected, the driver 2010 operates similar to the corresponding components in the dimming controller 1408 in FIG. 15. As described in relation to FIG. 15, the comparator 534 compares the sensing signal 1454 with the reference signal REF to generate a comparing signal COMP. The pulse signal generator 504 generates a pulse signal 536 having a waveform of periodical pulses. In one embodiment, the SR flip-flop 522 sets the pulse signal V_{522} to digital one when the pulse signal 536 is digital one, and resets the pulse signal V_{522} to digital zero when the comparing signal COMP is digital one (e.g., when the sensing signal 1454 reaches the reference signal REF). The AND gate 524 receives the pulse signal V_{522} and the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, and generates the pulse signal 1952 at terminal

CTRL accordingly to control the control switch Q16. As such, when the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 is at the first state, e.g., digital one, the pulse signal 1952 is equal to the pulse signal V_{522} , which is switched between digital one and digital zero according to a result of the comparing signal COMP. When the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1 is at the second state, e.g., digital zero, the pulse signal 1952 remains at digital zero. As described in relation to FIG. 15, the reference signal REF determines a peak level of the current I_{LED1} . The duty cycle of the pulse width modulation signal PWM1 determines a ratio of a time when the switch Q16 is turned on to a time when the switch Q16 is turned off. Therefore, by adjusting the reference signal REF and/or the duty cycle of the pulse width modulation signal PWM1, the dimmer 2002 is capable of operating in an analog dimming mode, a burst dimming mode, and a combination dimming mode to adjust the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$.

[0150] According to the example in Table 3, when the counter value VALUE_1504 is 0, the dimming controller 1908 operates in the first mode, the reference signal REF has a level V_{REF0} , and the duty cycle of the pulse width modulation signal PWM1 has a value D_{PWM0} . If the counter value VALUE_1504 is changed from 0 to 1, the dimming controller 1908 remains in the first mode, and the target level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is changed from $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $30\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. If the dimmer 2002 operates in an analog dimming mode, the level of the reference signal REF is adjusted to be $30\% \cdot V_{REF0}$, and the duty cycle of PWM1 remains at the same value D_{PWM0} . If the dimmer 2002 operates in a burst dimming mode, the level of the reference signal REF remains at the same level V_{REF0} , while the duty cycle of PWM1 is adjusted to be $30\% \cdot D_{PWM0}$. If the dimmer 2002 operates in a combination mode, both the level of the reference signal REF and the duty cycle of PWM1 are changed, for example, the level of the reference signal REF is $50\% \cdot V_{REF0}$, and the duty cycle of PWM1 is $60\% \cdot D_{PWM0}$. In all the three instances, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ can be adjusted from $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $30\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to achieve the dimming control for the LED light source 312 in the first mode.

[0151] When the dimming controller 1908 operates in the second mode, e.g., if the counter value VALUE_1504 is changed from 1 to 2 according to Table 3, then the dimming controller 1908 generates the control signal 1954 at the voltage control terminal CTRL to turn off the switch Q16. More specifically, the mode selection module 2004 controls the PWM generator 1508 to maintain the pulse width modulation signal PWM1 at the second state, e.g., digital zero. The AND gate 524 maintains the voltage at the terminal CTRL at a low electrical level to generate the control signal 1954, e.g., a digital zero signal. Thus, the current I_{LED1} flowing through the LED light source 312 is cut off.

[0152] In addition, the current source 2006 generates a substantially constant current I_{LED2} , in one embodiment. The mode selection module 2004 generates a switch control signal 2012 to turn on the switch 2008. A current path for the current I_{LED2} is conducted, e.g., when the switch Q27 is turned on after a turn-on operation of the power switch 304. As such, the current I_{LED2} flows through the LED light source 312, the current control terminal CS, the switch 2008, and ground. As used herein, "a substantially constant current I_{LED2} " means that the current I_{LED2} may vary but is within a range such that the current ripple caused by non-ideality of the circuit components can be neglected. Advantageously, since the current I_{LED2} is not affected by the switching noise of one or more switches, e.g., the power switch 304 and/or the switch Q16, the line interface of the light source 312 can be reduced or eliminated. As such, the lighting stability of the light source driving circuit 1900 is further improved. The dimming controller 1908 can have other configurations and is not limited to the example shown in FIG. 20.

[0153] FIG. 21 shows an example of a diagram illustrating an operation of a light source driving circuit which includes the dimming controller 1908 in FIG. 19, in an embodiment according to the present invention. FIG. 21 is described in combination with FIG. 19 and FIG. 20. FIG. 21 shows the voltage V_{CLK} at the terminal CLK, the counter value VALUE_1504 of the counter 1504, the voltage V_{PWM1} of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, the duty cycle D_{PWM1} of the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, the current I_{LED} flowing through the LED light source 312, and the average level $I_{AVERAGE}$ of the current I_{LED} . In the example of FIG. 19, the dimming controller 1908 determines the operation mode and controls the average current of the LED light source 312 according to Table 3.

[0154] At time t_0 ", the power switch 304 is off. The dimming controller 1908 turns off the switch Q27. The counter value VALUE_1504 is 0. Based upon Table 3, the mode selection module 2004 selects the first mode, and the target level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. Thus, the PWM generator 1508 adjusts the duty cycle D_{PWM1} to 100%, and the reference signal generator 1506 controls the reference signal REF to adjust the peak value of the current I_{LED} to I_{PEAK} , e.g., a maximum level of the peak value. At time t_1 ", when the voltage V_{CLK} at the CLK terminal has a rising edge indicating a turn-on operation of the power switch 304, the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is consequently adjusted to $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. Between the time t_1 " and t_2 ", the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is maintained at $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$.

[0155] At time t_2 ", the voltage V_{CLK} has a falling edge indicating a turn-off operation of the power switch 304. The switch Q27 is turned off to cut off the current I_{LED} . Thus, between t_2 " and t_3 ", the current I_{LED} drops to substantially zero amperes and the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ drops to substantially zero amperes.

[0156] In one embodiment, upon detection of a turn-off operation of the power switch 304 at time t_2 ", a dimming request signal is received. The counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 0 to 1. According to Table 3, the mode selection module 2004 remains in the first mode from time t_2 " to time t_4 ", and the target level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is adjusted to $30\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. In the example of FIG. 21, the dimmer 2002 operates in the combination mode, in which the PWM generator 1508 adjusts the duty cycle D_{PWM1} to 60%, and the reference signal generator 1506 controls the reference

signal REF to adjust the peak value of the current I_{LED} to be equal to $50\% \cdot I_{PEAK}$. When the voltage V_{CLK} at the CLK terminal has a rising edge indicating a turn-on operation of the power switch 304 at time t3", the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is adjusted to $30\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. Between the time t3" and t4", the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is maintained at $30\% \cdot I_{MAX}$.

[0157] At time t4", a falling edge of the voltage V_{CLK} indicates a turn-off operation of the power switch 304, and thus a dimming request signal is received. In response, the counter value VALUE_1504 is increased from 1 to 2. According to Table 3, the target level of the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is adjusted to $1\% \cdot I_{MAX}$, and the mode selection module 2004 selects the second mode. As such, the mode selection module 2004 generates the switch control signal 2012 to turn on the switch 2008. Between t4" and t5", both the current I_{LED} and the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ are at zero amperes since the power switch 304 and the switch Q27 are turned off.

[0158] At time t5", the voltage V_{CLK} has a rising edge indicating a turn-on operation of the power switch 304. Since the switch Q27 is turned on after a turn-on operation of the power switch 304, and since the switch 2008 is also turned on at time t4", the current path for the current I_{LED2} is conducted. The current I_{LED2} is equal to $1\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ in one embodiment. Thus, between t5" and t6", the average current $I_{AVERAGE}$ is maintained at $1\% \cdot I_{MAX}$.

[0159] Therefore, between t1" and t6", the dimming controller 1908 selects an operation mode from the first mode and the second mode according to the counter value VALUE_1504. Advantageously, the dimming controller 1908 achieves a relatively wide dimming range, e.g., a range of $100\% \cdot I_{MAX}$ to $1\% \cdot I_{MAX}$. The operations of the dimming controller 1908 are not limited to the example shown in FIG. 21. In another embodiment, during the second mode, the dimming controller 1908 is capable of providing another current, e.g., having a smaller constant current level $0.01 \cdot I_{MAX}$, to flow through the LED light source 312 and the terminal CS. Thus, the brightness of the LED light source 312 can be lower to achieve a wider dimming range. In addition, the current I_{LED2} is at a substantially constant level, which does not vary according to turn-on and turn-off operations of the switch Q16. As such, the light emitted by the LED light source 312 is not interfered with by switching noises of the switch Q16, which increases the lighting stability of the LED light source 312.

[0160] FIG. 22 shows a flowchart 2200 of operations performed by source dimming controller, e.g., the dimming controller 1908, in an embodiment according to the present invention. FIG. 22 is described in combination with FIG. 19-FIG. 21. Although specific steps are disclosed in FIG. 22, such steps are examples. That is, the present invention is well suited to performing various other steps or variations of the steps recited in FIG. 22.

[0161] In block 2202, a light source, e.g., the LED light source 312, is powered by a regulated voltage from a power converter, e.g., the power converter 310.

[0162] In block 2204, a switch monitoring signal is received. The switch monitoring signal indicates a conductance status of a power switch, e.g., the power switch 304, coupled between a power source and the power converter.

[0163] In block 2206, an operation mode is selected from at least a first mode and a second mode according to the switch monitoring signal. In one embodiment, when the switch monitoring signal indicating a turn-off operation of the power switch is received, the counter value of counter is changed from a first value to a second value accordingly. The counter value is compared with a threshold, e.g., 1, and the operation mode is selected according to a result of the comparison.

[0164] In block 2208, a control switch, e.g., the switch Q16, is operated between a first state, e.g., a switch-on state, and a second state, e.g., a switch-off state according to a pulse signal, e.g., the pulse signal 1952, if the first mode is selected. In one embodiment, the first current, e.g., I_{LED1} , flowing through the LED light source is increased during the first state of the control switch, and is decreased during the second state of the control switch. In one embodiment, if the first mode is selected, a reference signal, e.g., the reference signal REF, and a pulse-width modulation signal, e.g., the pulse-width modulation signal PWM1, are received. If the first mode is selected, a sensing signal indicating the first current flowing through the LED light source is compared with the reference signal. The control switch is turned on and off according to a result of the comparing during a first state, e.g., digital one, of the pulse-width modulation signal, and is turned off during a second state, e.g., digital zero, of the pulse-width modulation signal. In one embodiment, if the counter value is changed from a third value to a fourth value while still operating in the first mode, the level of the reference signal and the duty cycle of the pulse-width signal are adjusted to adjust the brightness of the LED light source.

[0165] In block 2210, the first current, e.g., the current I_{LED1} , is cut off according to a control signal, e.g., the control signal 1954, if the second mode is selected. In one embodiment, in the second mode, the pulse-width modulation signal is maintained in the second state, e.g., digital zero, to generate the control signal, e.g., a digital zero signal, to cut off the first current.

[0166] In block 2212, a substantially constant current, e.g., current I_{LED2} , flows through the LED light source 312 if the second mode is selected. In one embodiment, the current I_{LED2} is provided by a current source, e.g., current source 2006. When the second mode is selected, the mode selection module 2004 generates a switch control signal 2012 to turn on the switch 2008 coupled with the current source 2006 in series.

[0167] While the foregoing description and drawings represent embodiments of the present invention, it will be understood that various additions, modifications and substitutions may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the principles of the present invention as defined in the accompanying claims. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention may be used with many modifications of form, structure, arrangement, proportions, materials, elements,

and components and otherwise, used in the practice of the invention, which are particularly adapted to specific environments and operative requirements without departing from the principles of the present invention. The presently disclosed embodiments are therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, and not limited to the foregoing description.

Claims

1. A dimming controller for a light-emitting diode (LED) light source, said dimming controller comprising:

a voltage control terminal configured to provide a pulse signal when said dimming controller operates in a first mode, said pulse signal operating a control switch in one of a first state and a second state, wherein a first current flowing through said LED light source increases during operation of said control switch in said first state and decreases during operation of said control switch in said second state, and wherein said voltage control terminal provides a control signal to said control switch to cut off said first current when said dimming controller operates in a second mode; and
a current control terminal configured to conduct a second current through said LED light source when said dimming controller operates in said second mode.

2. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second current has a substantially constant level.

3. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 1 or 2, further comprising:

a monitoring terminal configured to receive a switch monitoring signal indicative of a conductance status of a power switch coupled between a power source and a power converter, wherein said power converter receives an input voltage from said power source and provides an output voltage to power said LED light source; and
a dimmer coupled to said monitoring terminal and configured to select an operation mode from said first mode and said second mode according to said switch monitoring signal.

4. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 3, wherein said dimmer comprises:

a counter configured to provide a count value that varies according to said switch monitoring signal; and
a mode selection module coupled to said counter and configured to select said operation mode according to said count value.

5. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 4, wherein said mode selection module compares said count value with a threshold to select said operation mode.

6. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 4 or 5, wherein said counter changes said count value from a first value to a second value if said switch monitoring signal indicates that said power switch performs a turn-off operation.

7. The dimming controller as claimed in one of claims 1 to 6, further comprising:

a dimmer configured to provide a reference signal and a pulse-width modulation signal; and
a driver coupled to said dimmer and configured to compare said reference signal with a sensing signal indicating said first current through said LED light source, and further configured to generate said pulse signal based on a result of said comparing and also based on said pulse-width modulation signal during operation in said first mode.

8. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 7, wherein said pulse-width modulation signal has a first state and a second state, and wherein said pulse signal turns said control switch on and off according to said comparing result with said pulse-width modulation signal in its first state and turns off said control switch with said pulse-width modulation signal in its second state.

9. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 8, wherein said first current decreases until reaching a predetermined current level with said pulse-width modulation signal in its second state.

10. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said dimmer maintains said pulse-width modulation signal

in its second state if said dimming controller is switched to said second mode, wherein said control signal is generated at said voltage control terminal to cut off said first current.

11. The dimming controller as claimed in one of claims 7 to 10, wherein said dimmer comprises:

a counter configured to provide a counter value,
wherein during operation in said first mode, said dimmer maintains the level of said reference signal and adjusts the duty cycle of said pulse-width modulation signal if said counter value is changed from a first value to a second value.

12. The dimming controller as claimed in one of claims 7 to 10, wherein said dimmer comprises:

a counter configured to provide a counter value,
wherein during operation in said first mode, said dimmer adjusts the level of said reference signal and maintains the duty cycle of said pulse-width modulation signal if said counter value is changed from a first value to a second value.

13. The dimming controller as claimed in one of claims 7 to 10, wherein said dimmer comprises:

a counter that provides a counter value,
wherein during an operation in said first mode, said dimmer adjusts both the level of said reference signal and the duty cycle of said pulse-width modulation signal if said counter value is changed from a first value to a second value.

14. The dimming controller as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

a current source configured to generate said second current;
a second switch coupled to said current source; and
a dimmer configured to turn on said second switch to conduct said second current through said current control terminal and said LED light source when said dimming controller operates in said second mode, and further configured to turn off said second switch to cut off said second current when said dimming controller operates in said first mode.

15. An electronic system comprising:

a dimming controller according to one of claims 3 to 14; further comprising said power converter coupled to said dimming controller and configured to receive an input voltage from a rectifier and provide said output voltage to said light-emitting diode (LED) light source, wherein said power switch transfers power from an AC power source to said rectifier when said power switch is on, and wherein said dimming controller coupled to said power converter is configured to detect a dimming request signal indicative of an operation of said power switch, said dimming controller being operable in a mode selected from said first mode and said second mode to control dimming of said LED light source in response to said dimming request signal.

16. A method for adjusting power for a light-emitting diode (LED) light source, comprising:

powering said light source by a regulated voltage from a power converter;
receiving a switch monitoring signal indicative of a conductance status of a power switch coupled between a power source and said power converter;
selecting an operation mode from at least a first mode and a second mode according to said switch monitoring signal;
operating a control switch at one of a first state and a second state if said first mode is selected, wherein a first current flowing through said LED light source increases during operation at said first state and decreases during operation at said second state;
cutting off said first current if said second mode is selected; and
conducting a substantially constant current through said LED light source if said second mode is selected.

17. The method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising:

receiving a reference signal and a pulse-width modulation signal;
comparing a sensing signal indicative of said first current and said reference signal during operation in said first mode;
turning said control switch on and off according to a result of said comparing with said pulse-width modulation
5 signal at a first state if said first mode is selected;
turning off said control switch with said pulse-width modulation signal at a second state if said first mode is selected; and
maintaining said pulse-width modulation signal in its second state to cut off said first current if said second mode is selected.

10 **18.** The method as claimed in claim 16 or 17, further comprising:

providing a counter value that is changed from a first value to a second value if said switch monitoring signal indicates that said power switch performs a turn-off operation; and
15 comparing said count value with a threshold to select said operation mode from said first mode and said second mode.

19. The method as claimed in claim 18, further comprising:

20 adjusting the level of said reference signal and the duty cycle of said pulse-width modulation signal if said counter value is changed from a first value to a second value during operation in said first mode.

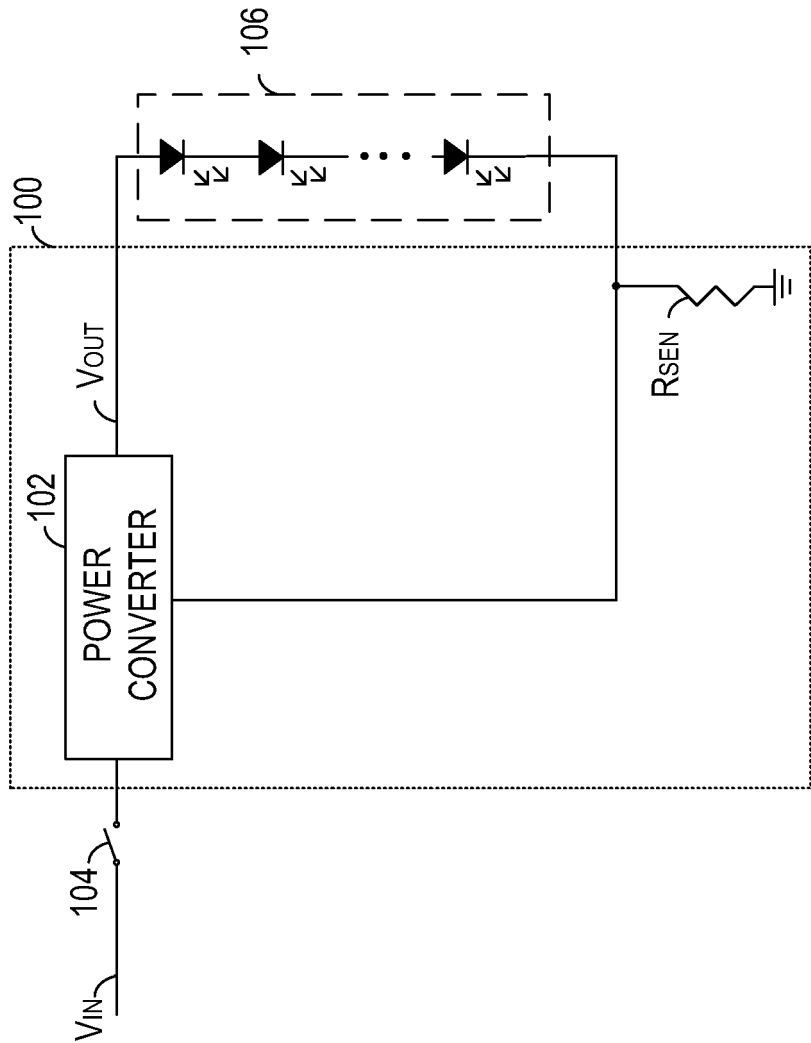


FIG. 1 PRIOR ART

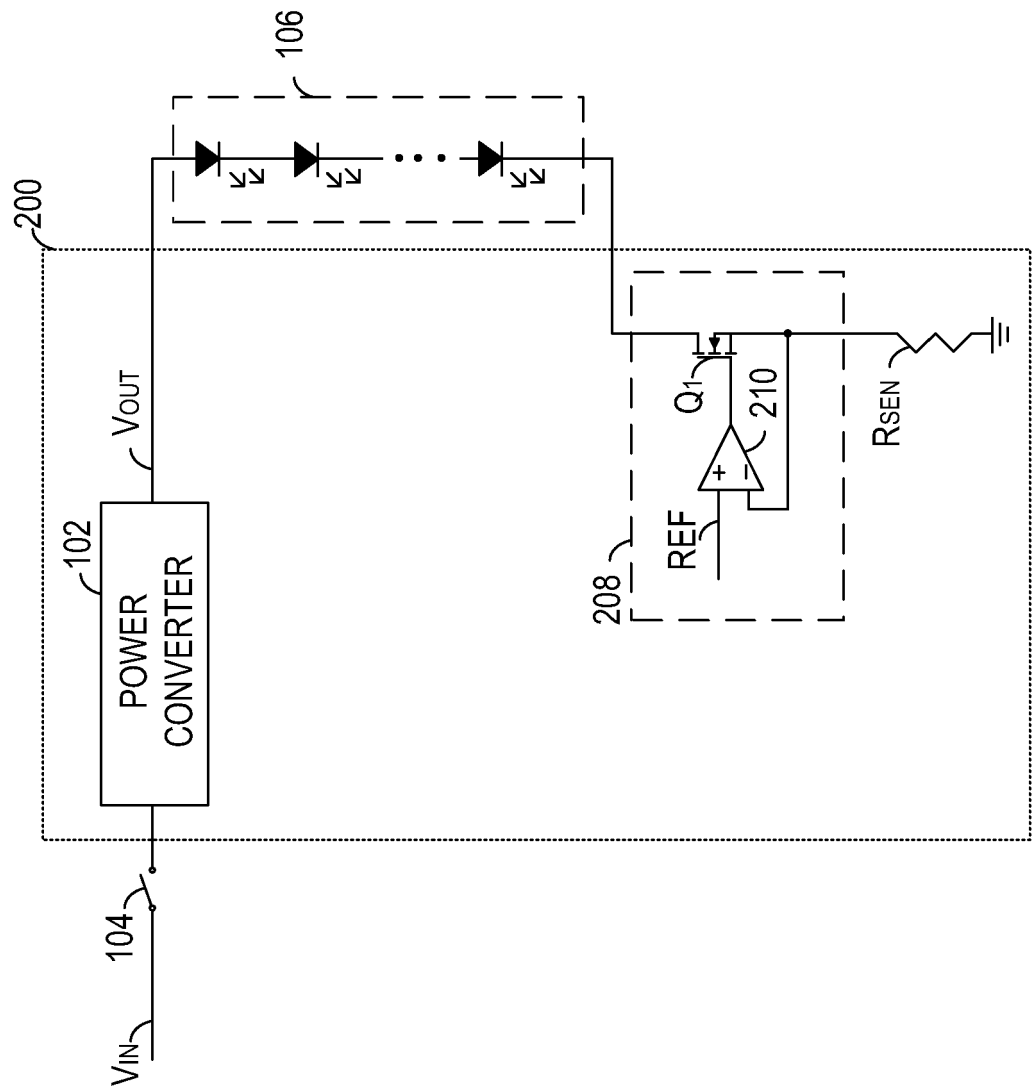


FIG. 2 PRIOR ART

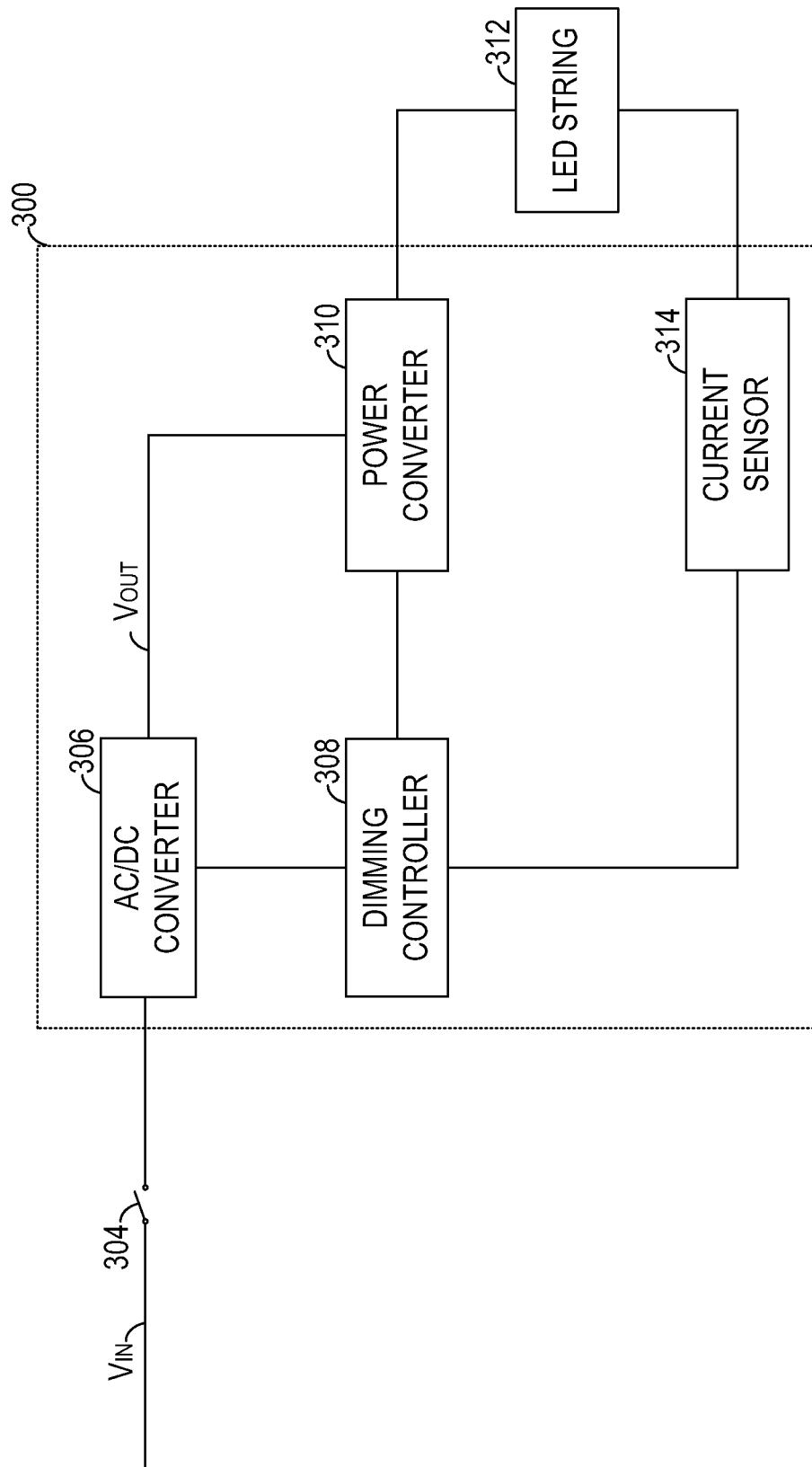
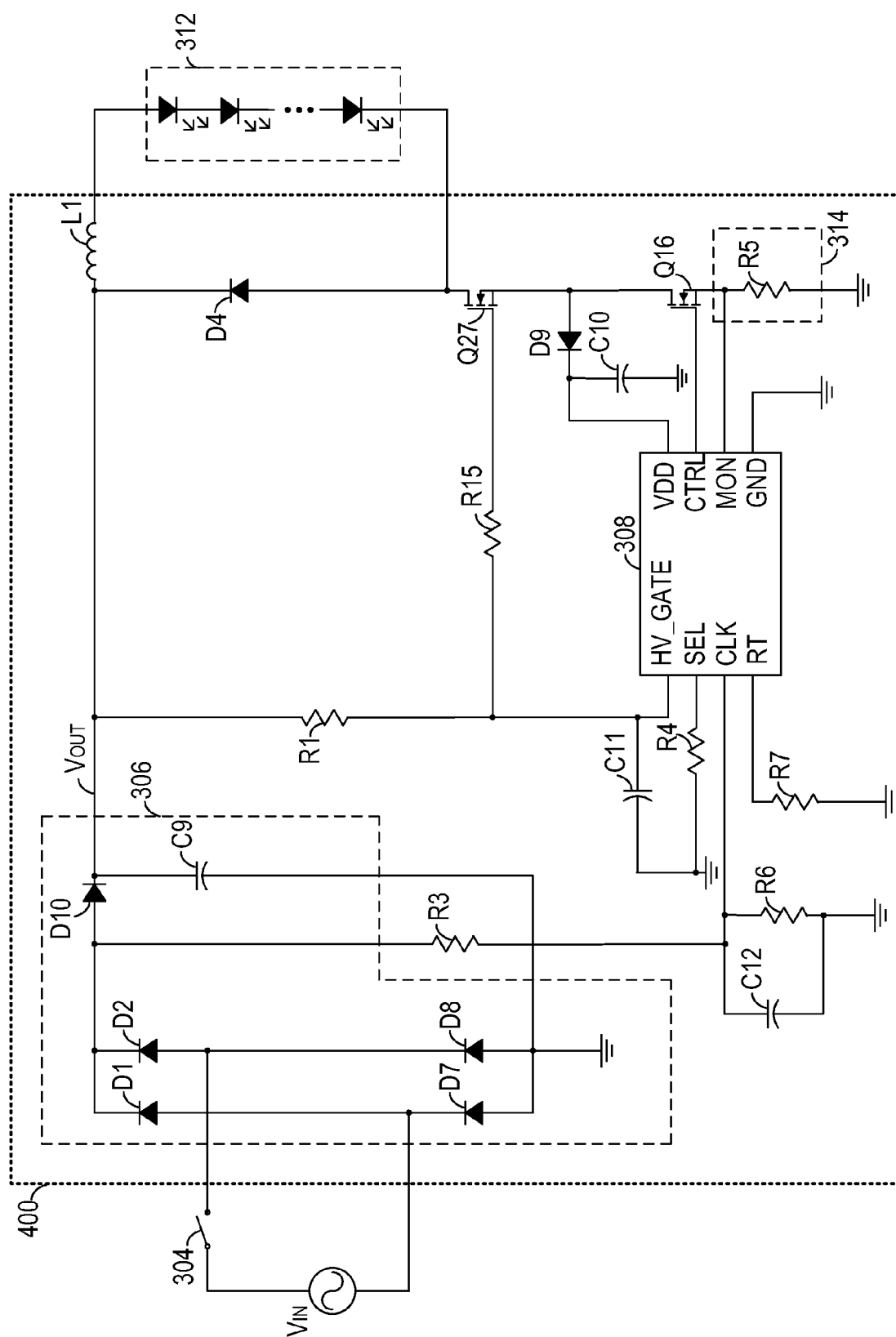


FIG. 3



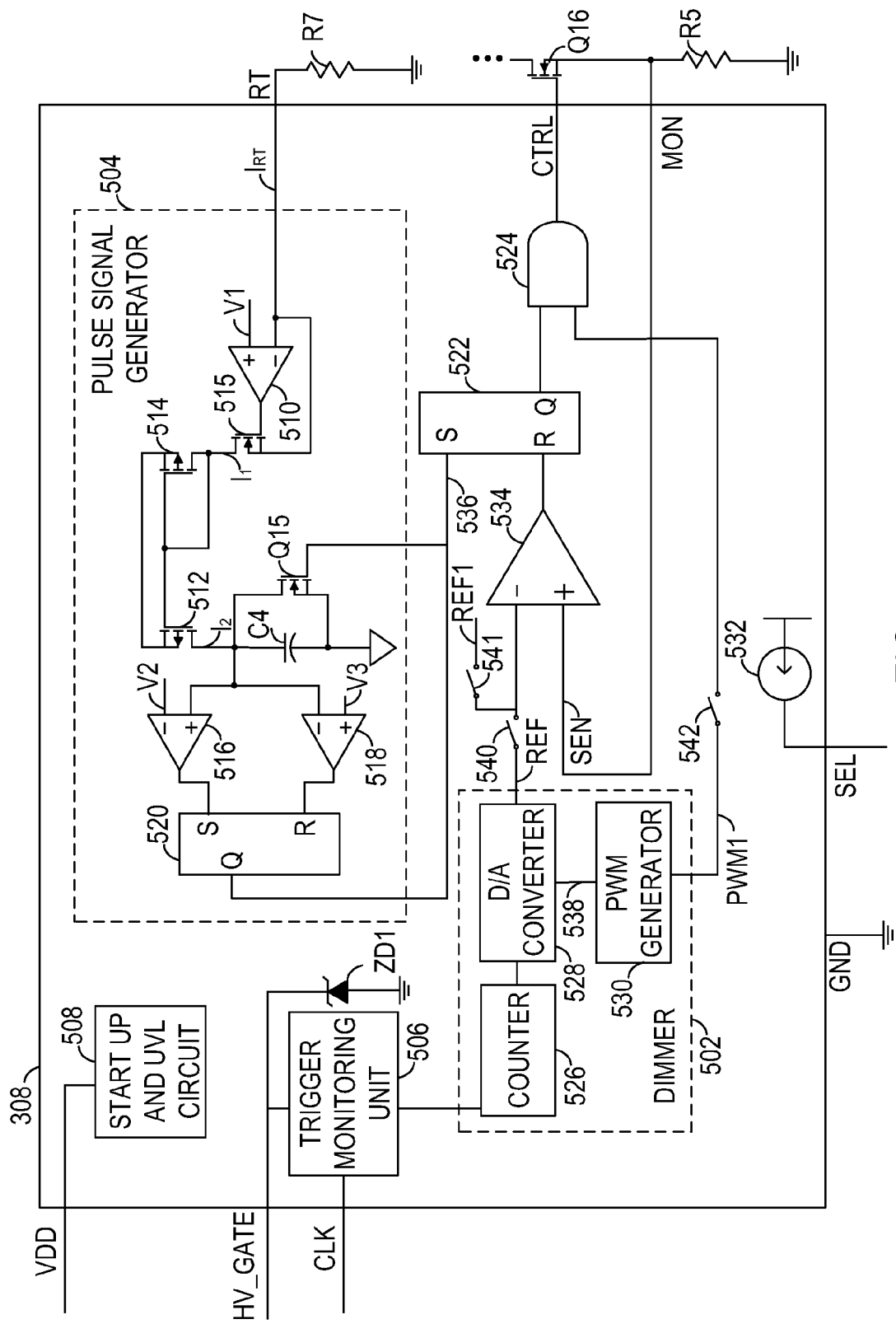


FIG. 5

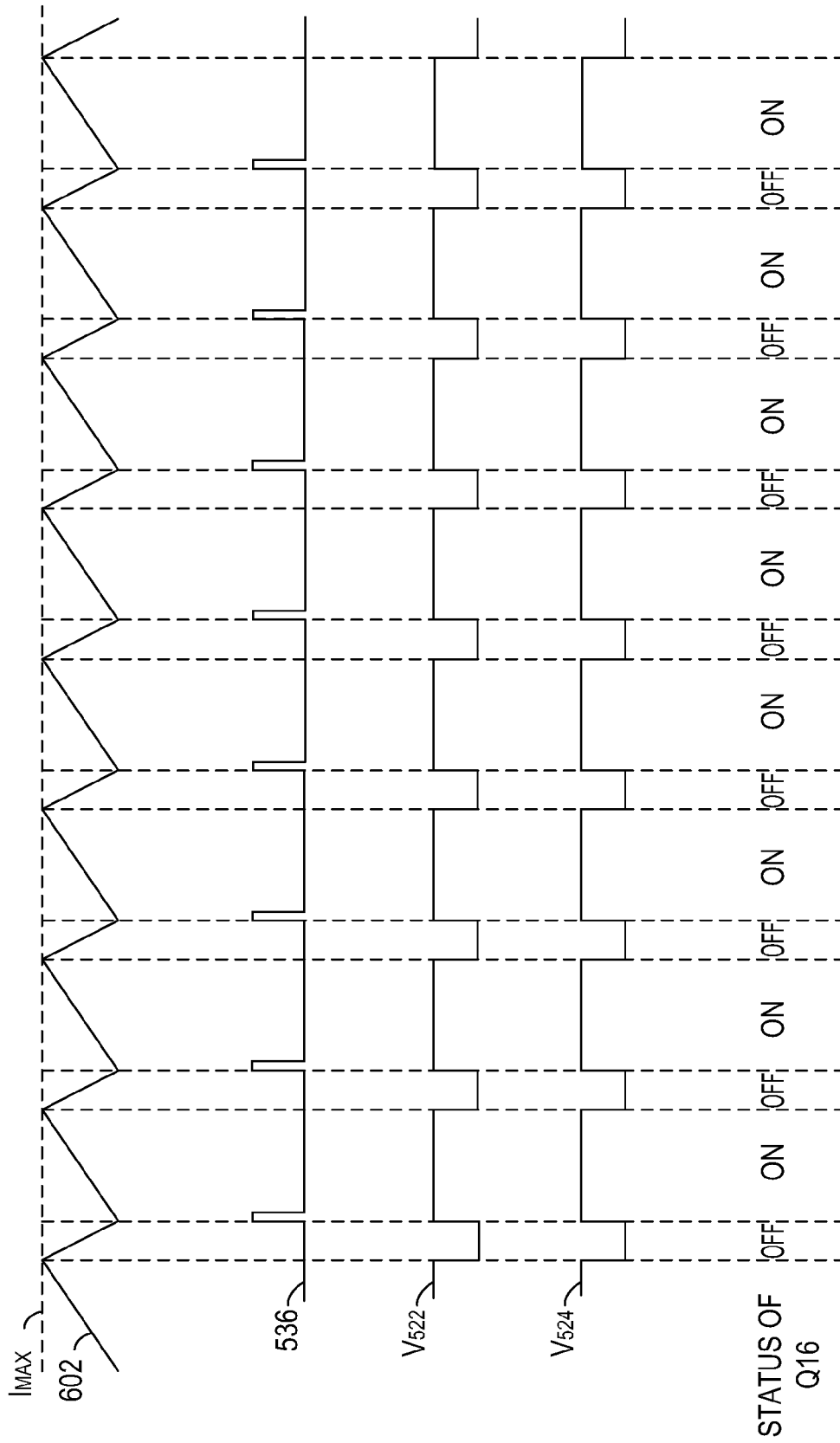


FIG. 6

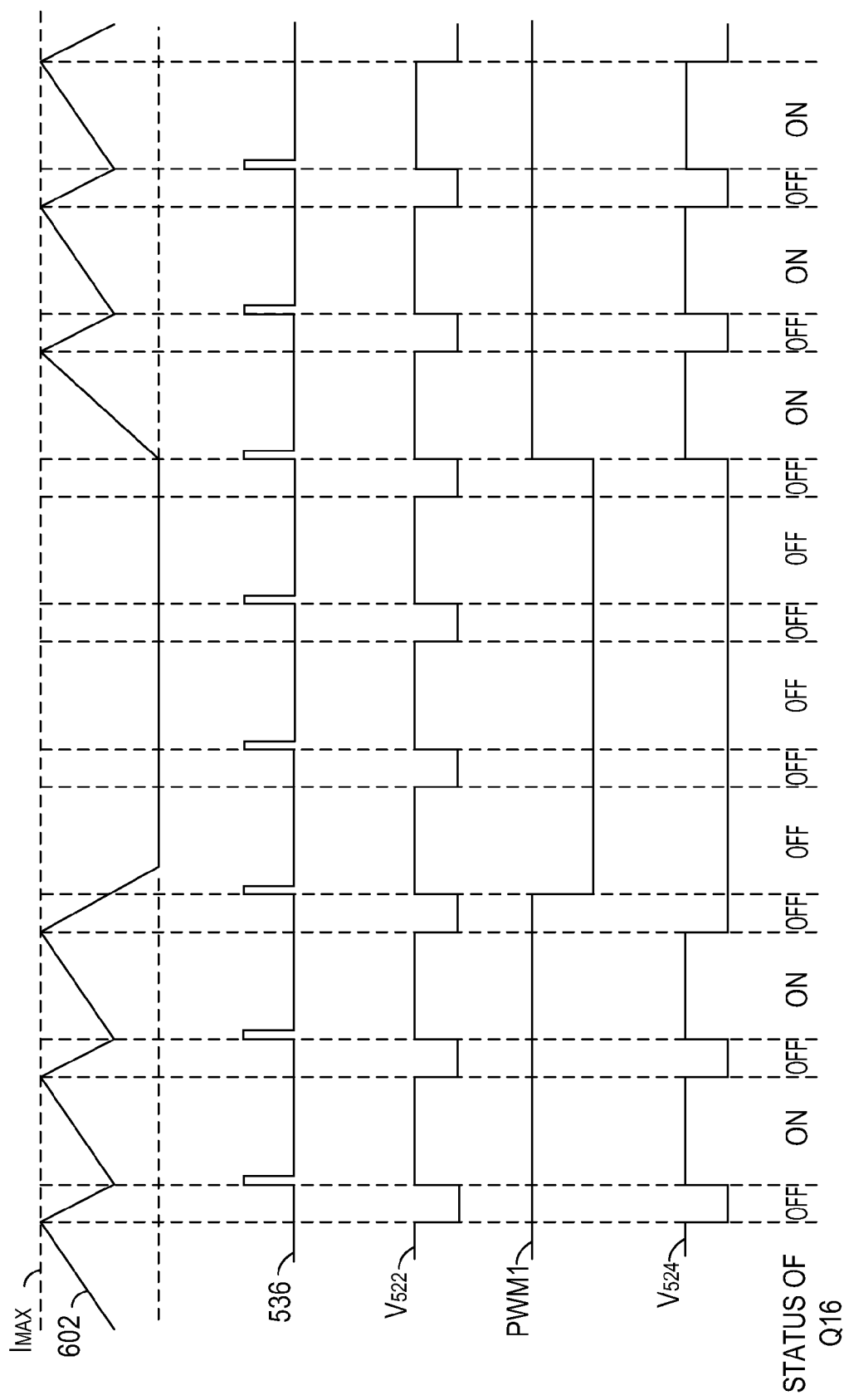


FIG. 7

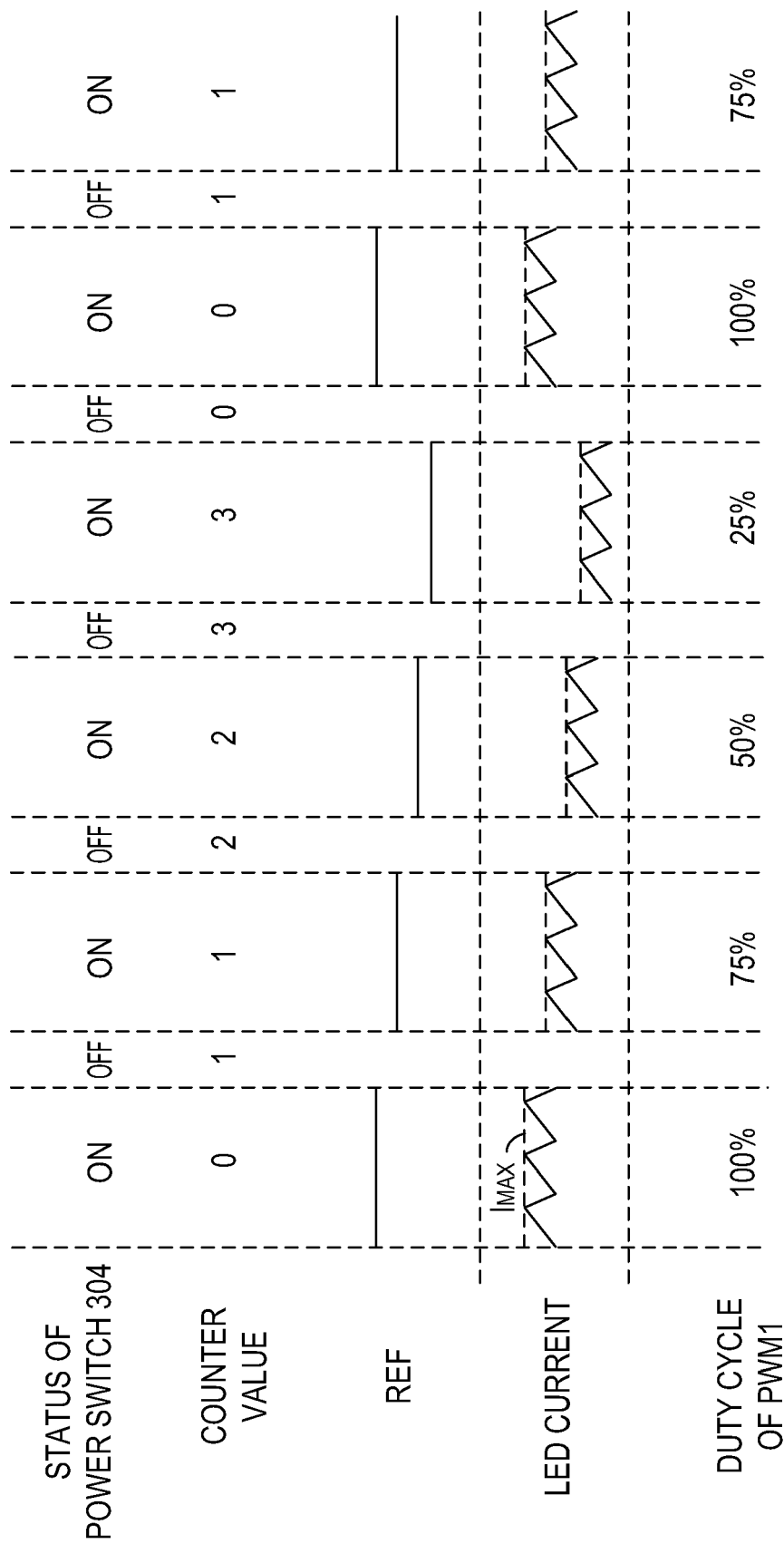


FIG. 8

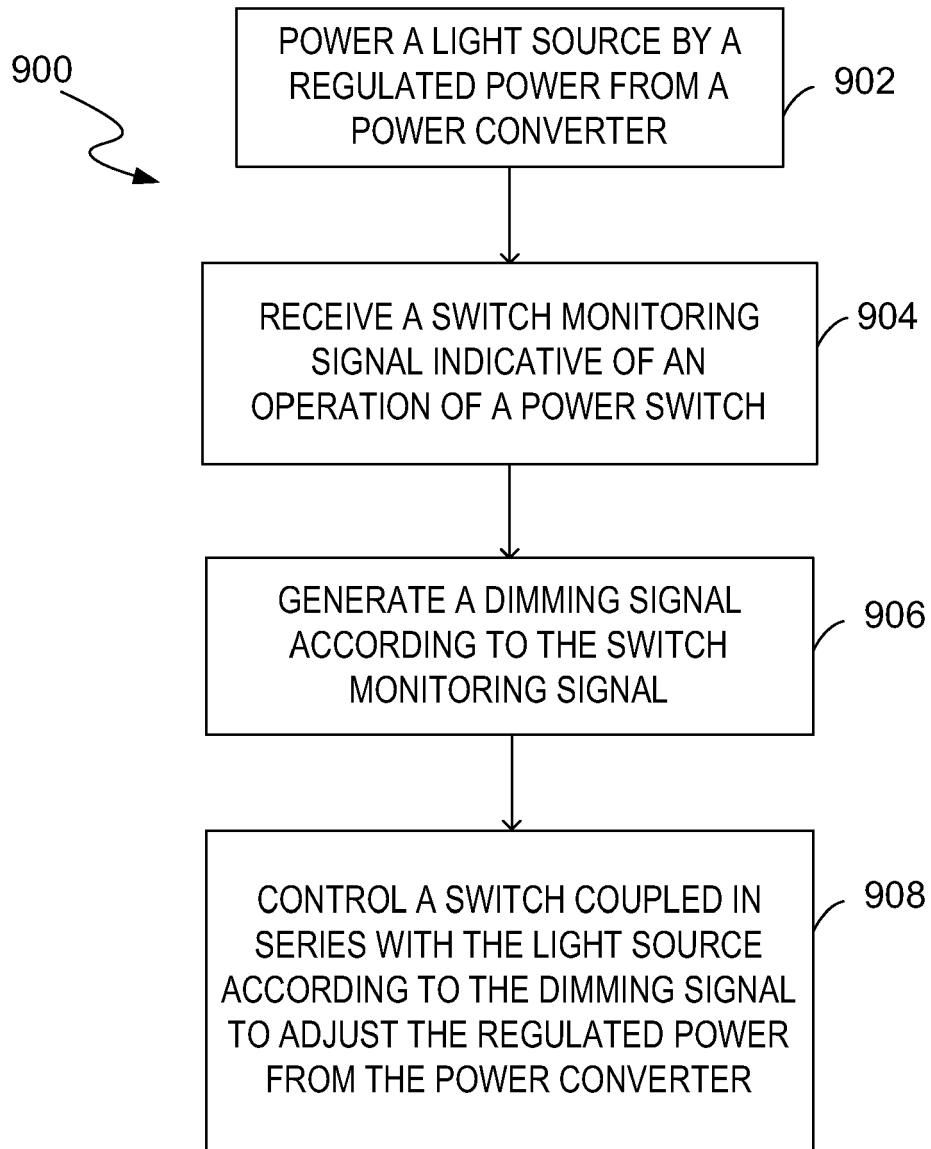
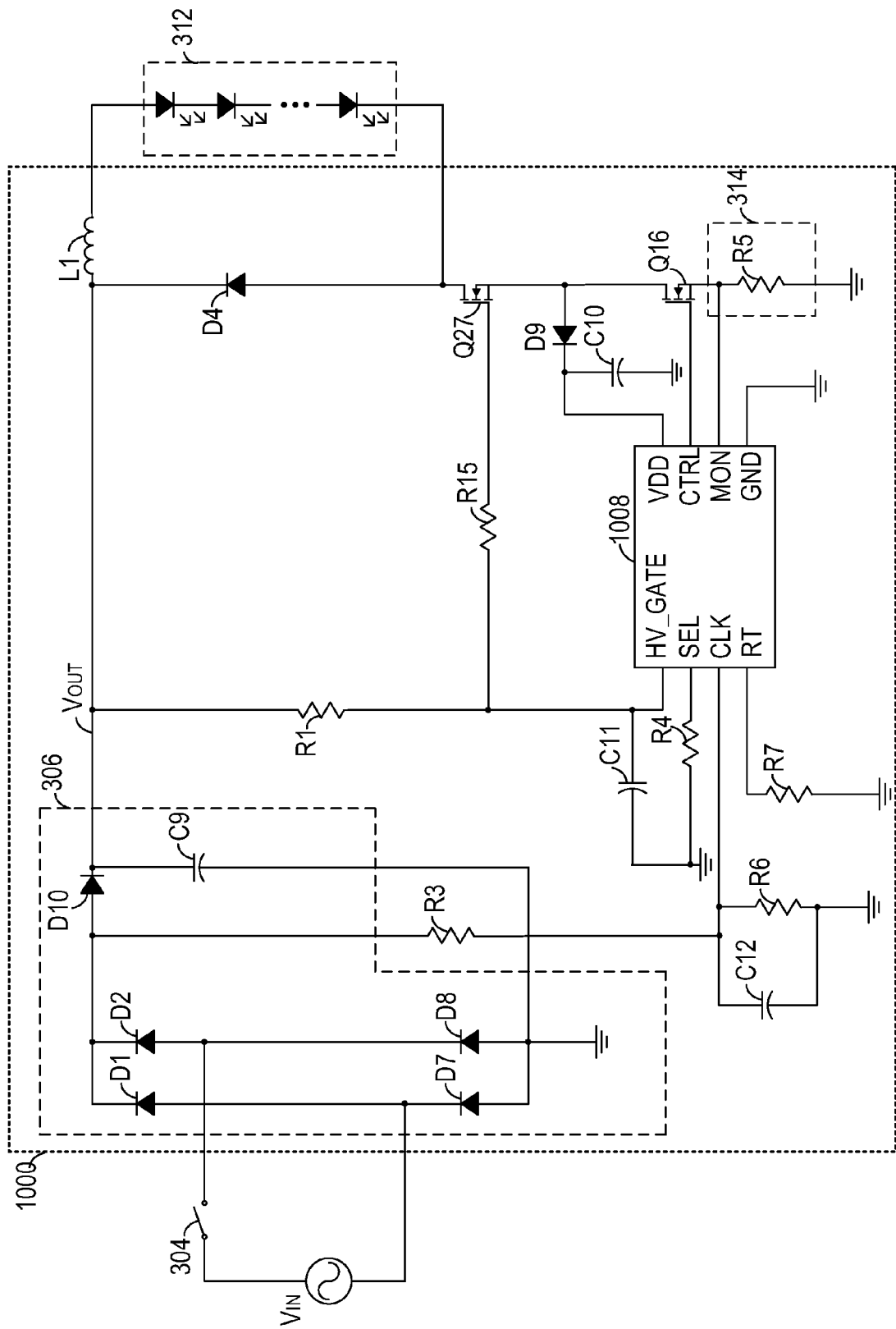


FIG. 9



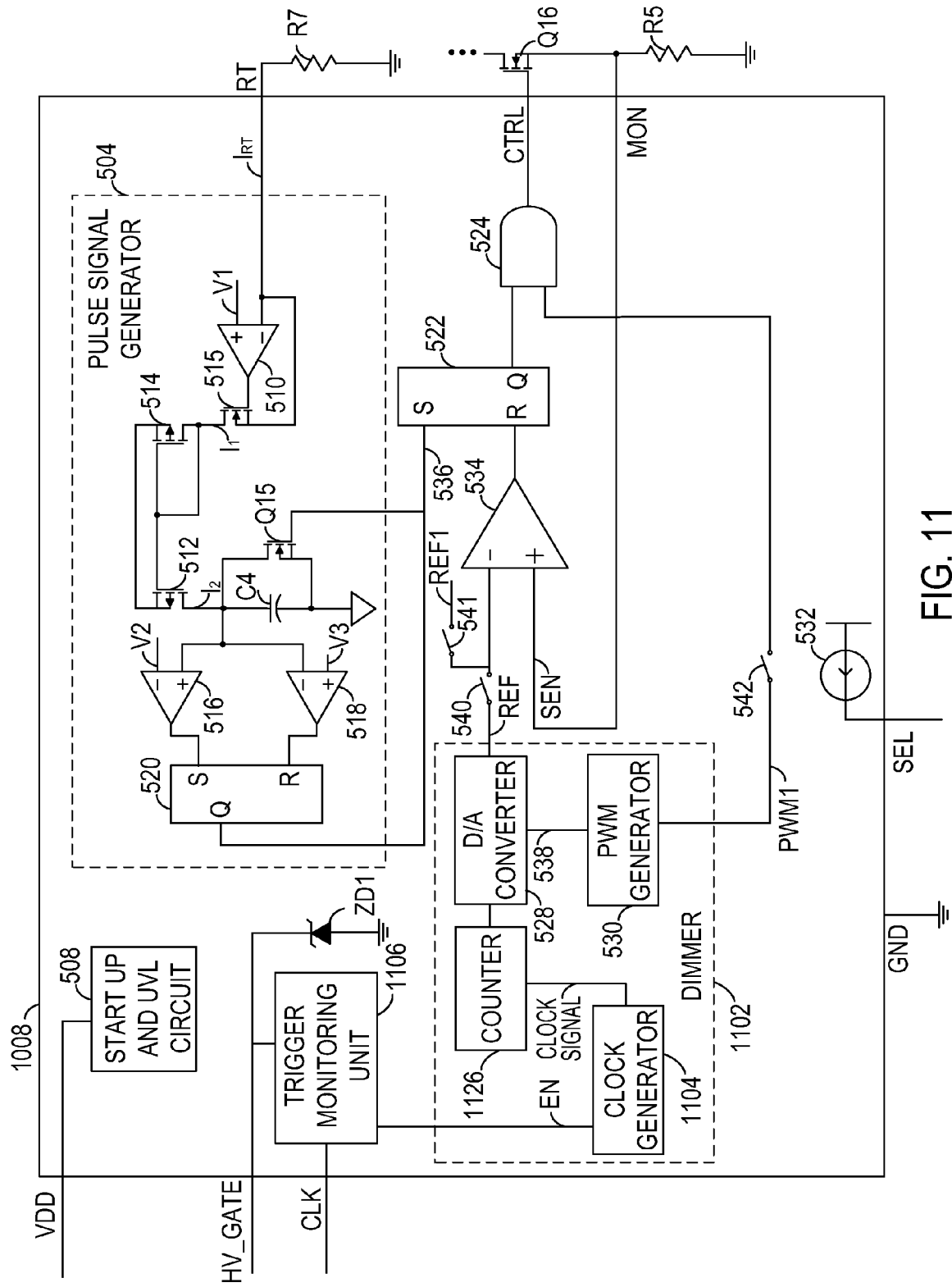


FIG. 11

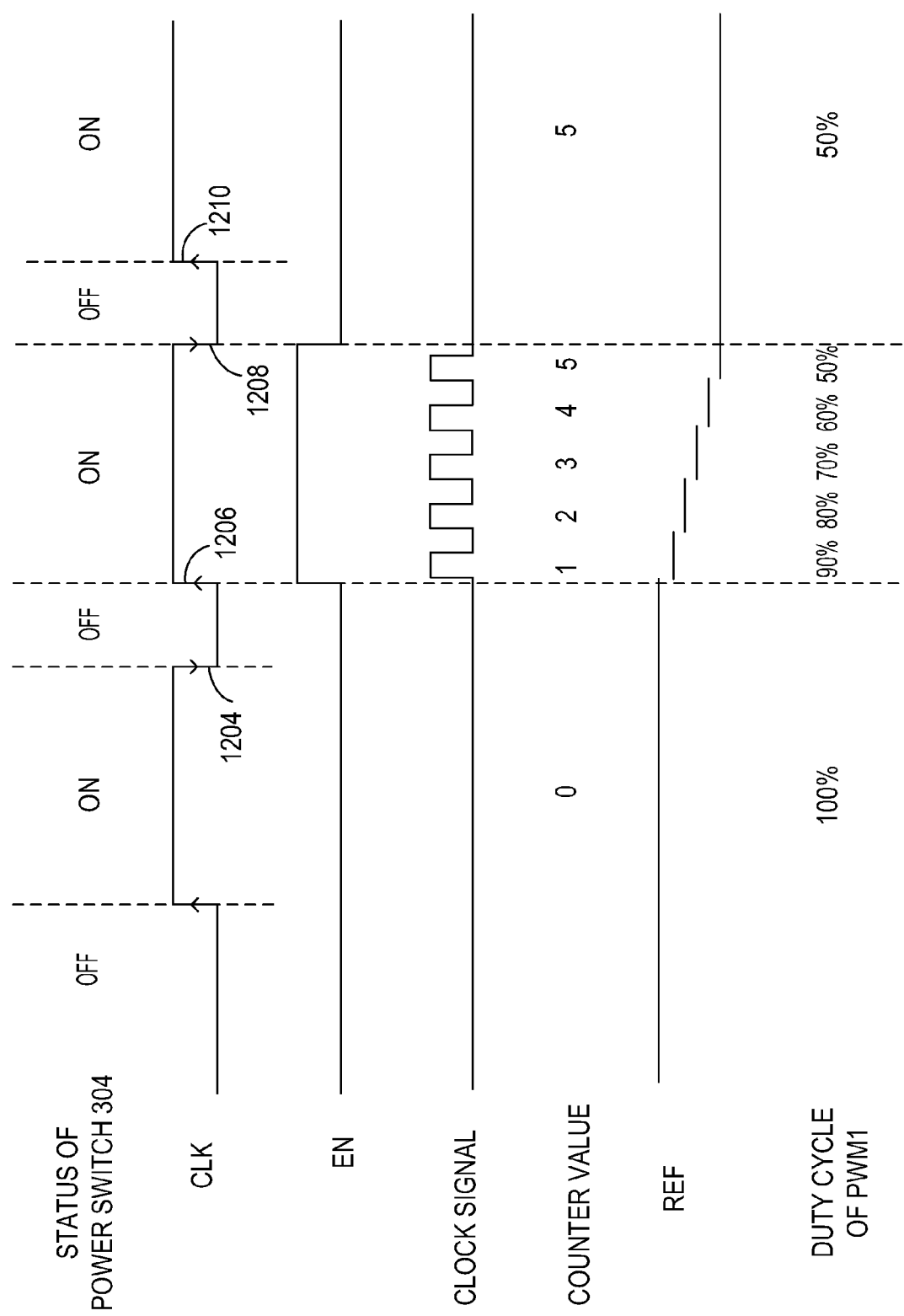


FIG. 12

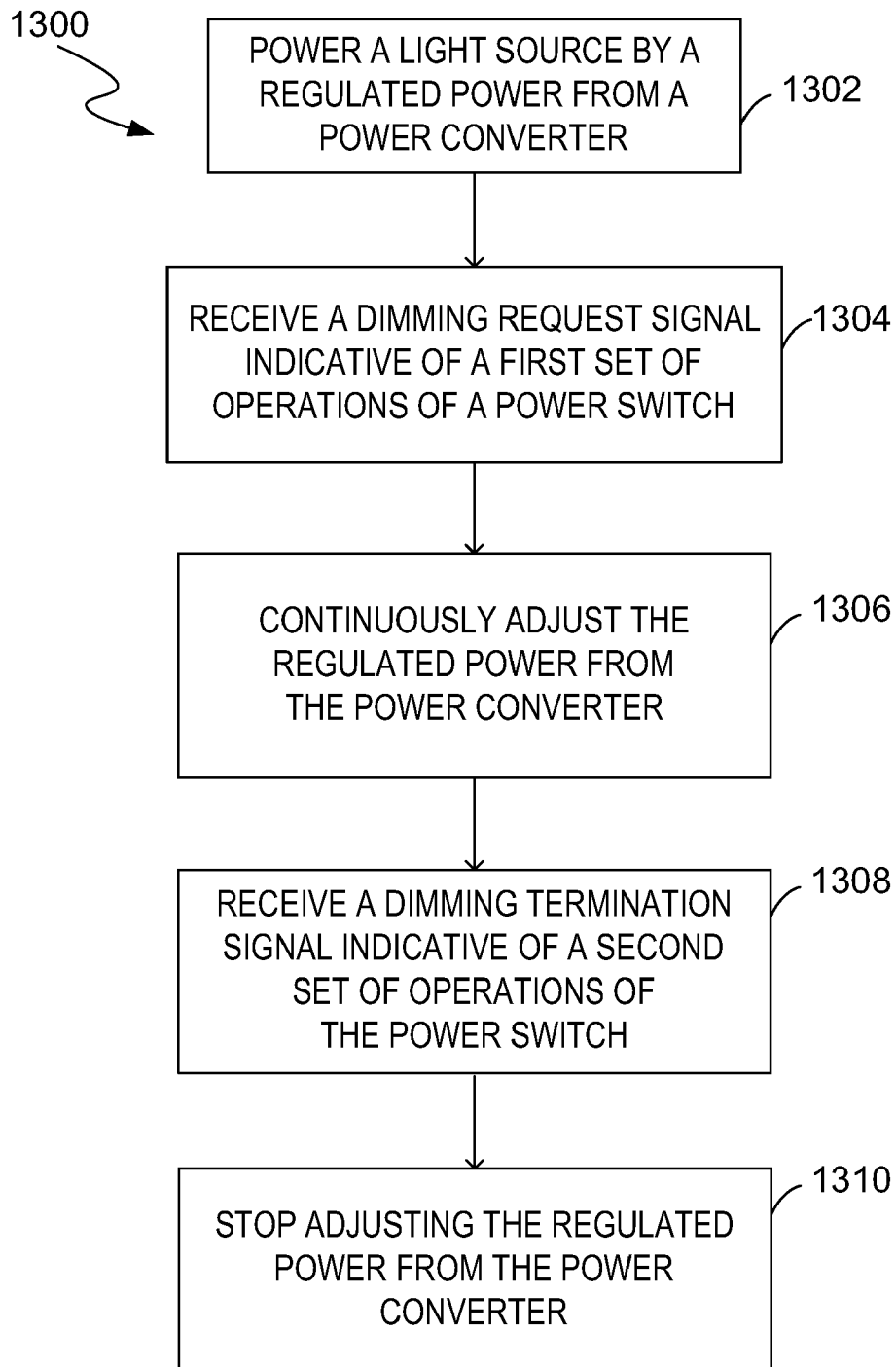


FIG. 13

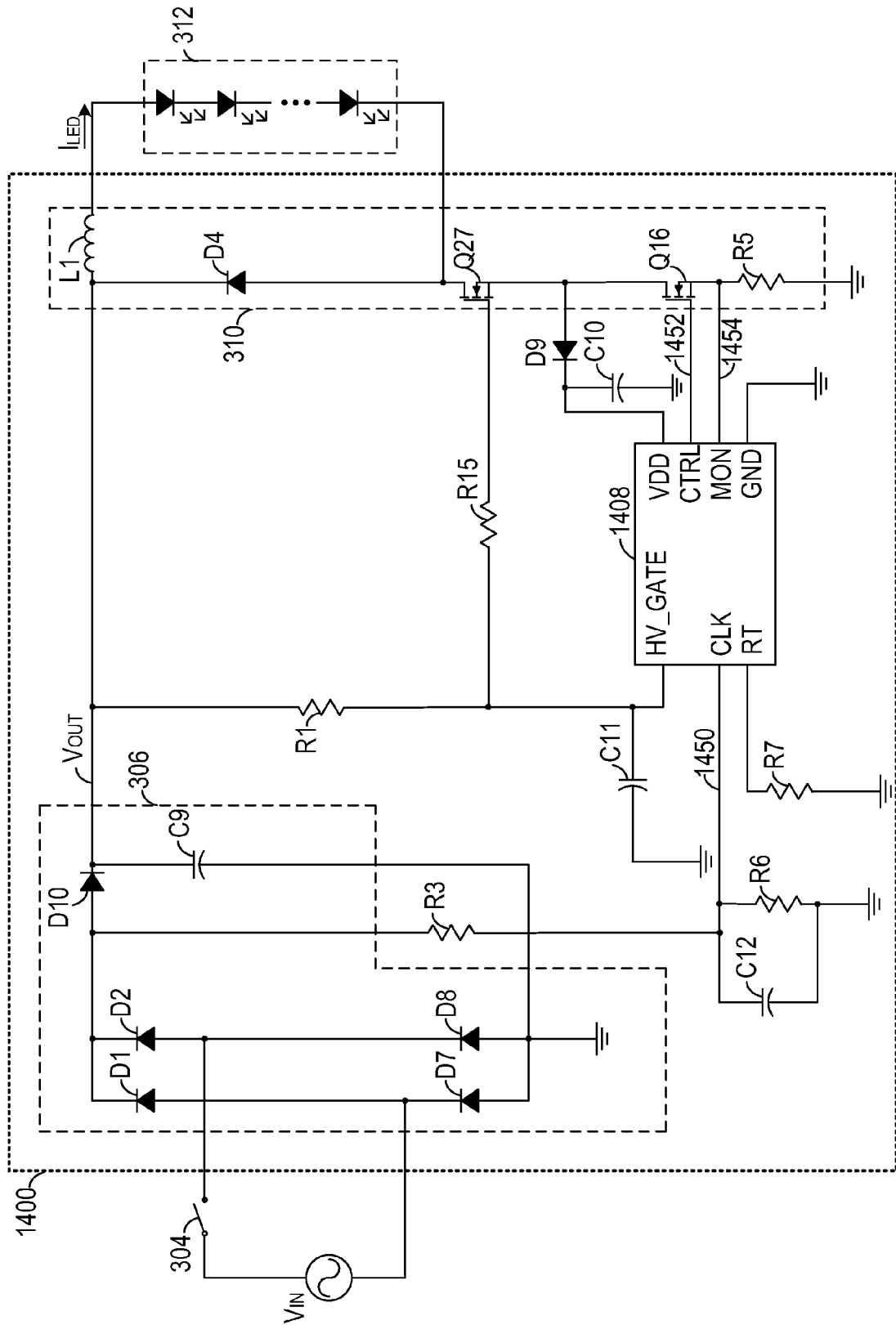


FIG. 14A

304

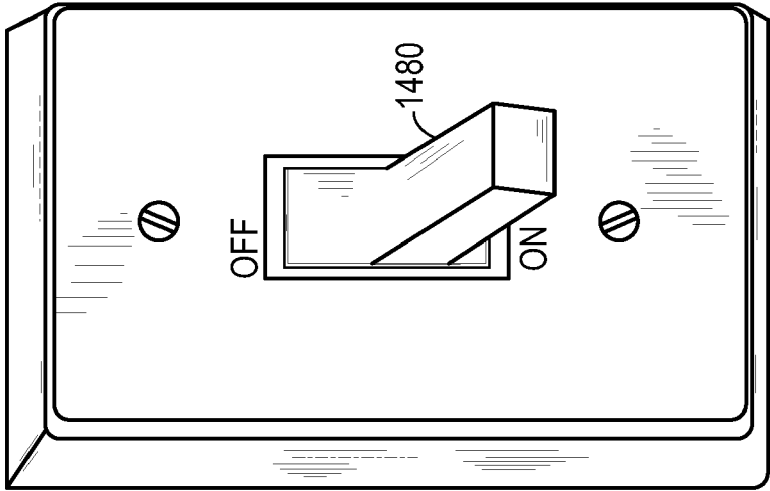


FIG. 14B

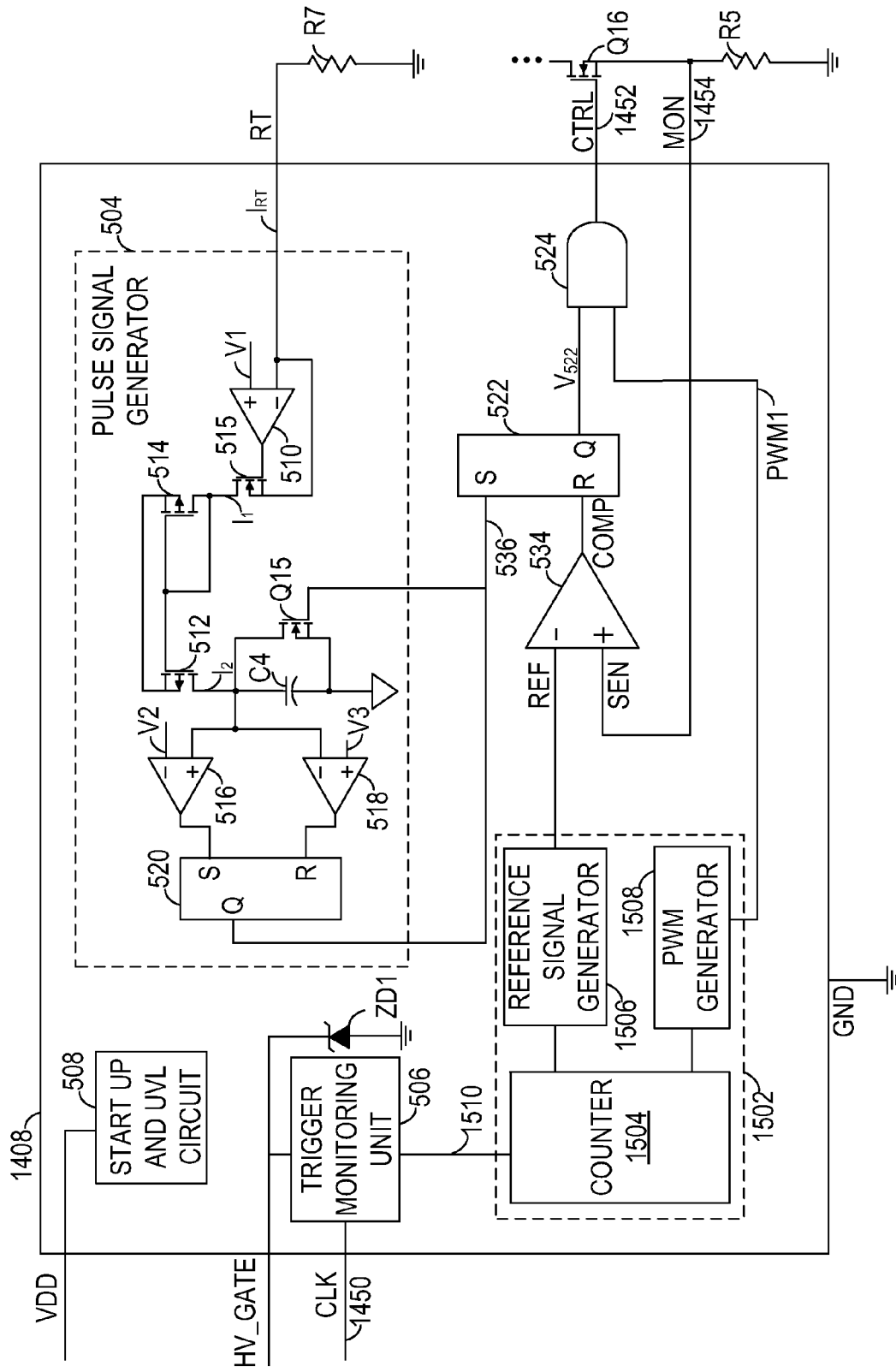


FIG. 15

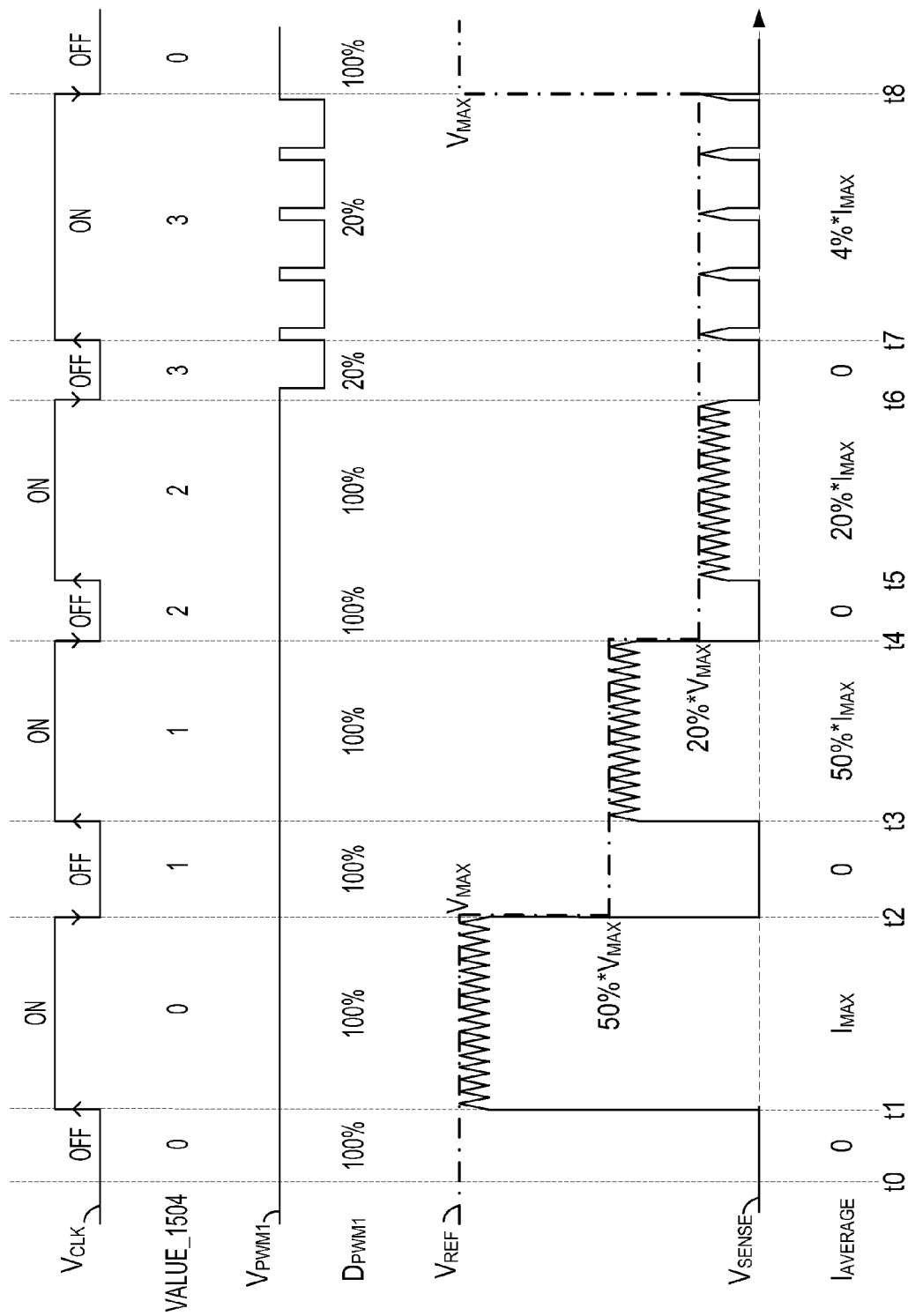


FIG. 16

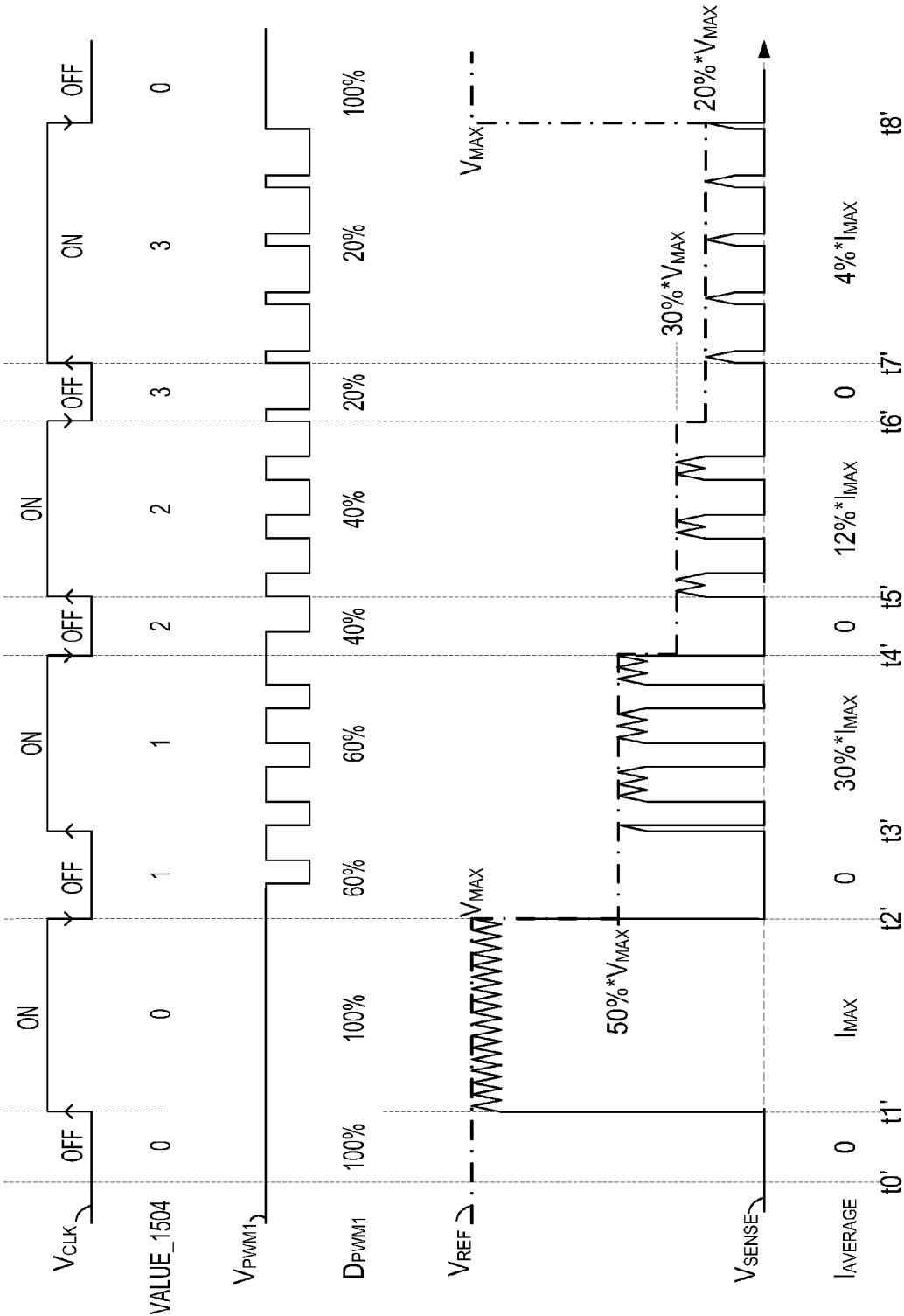


FIG. 17

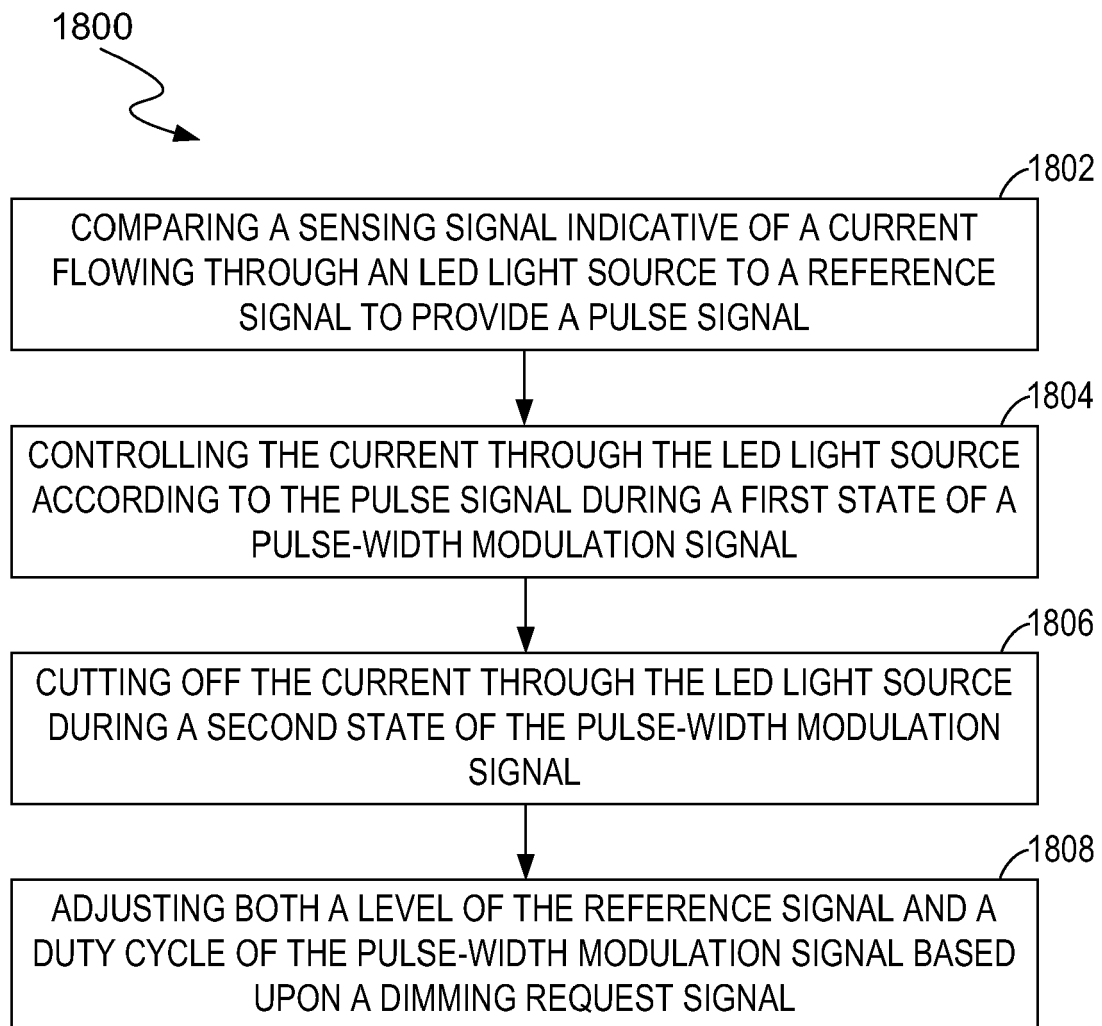
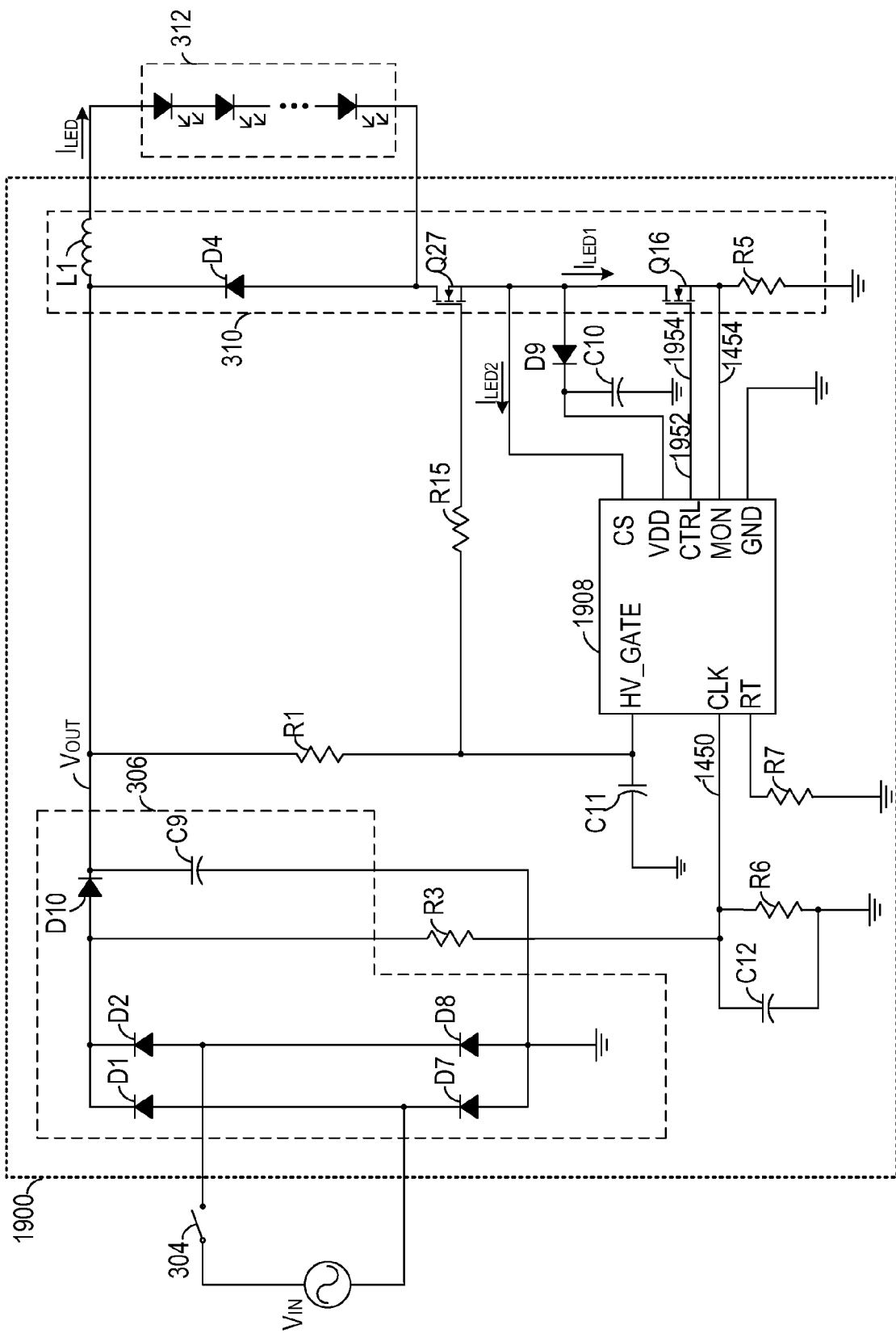


FIG. 18



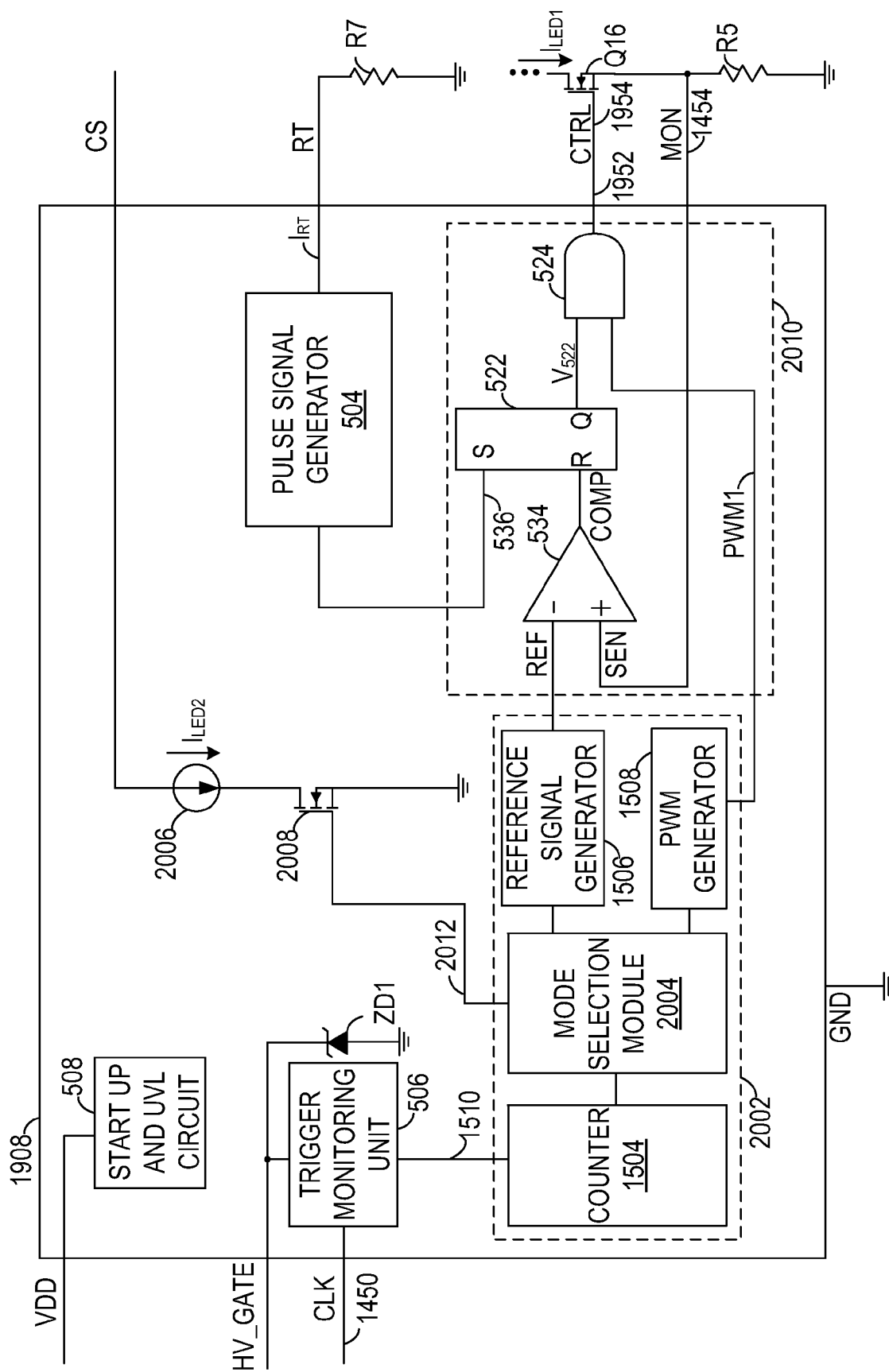


FIG. 20

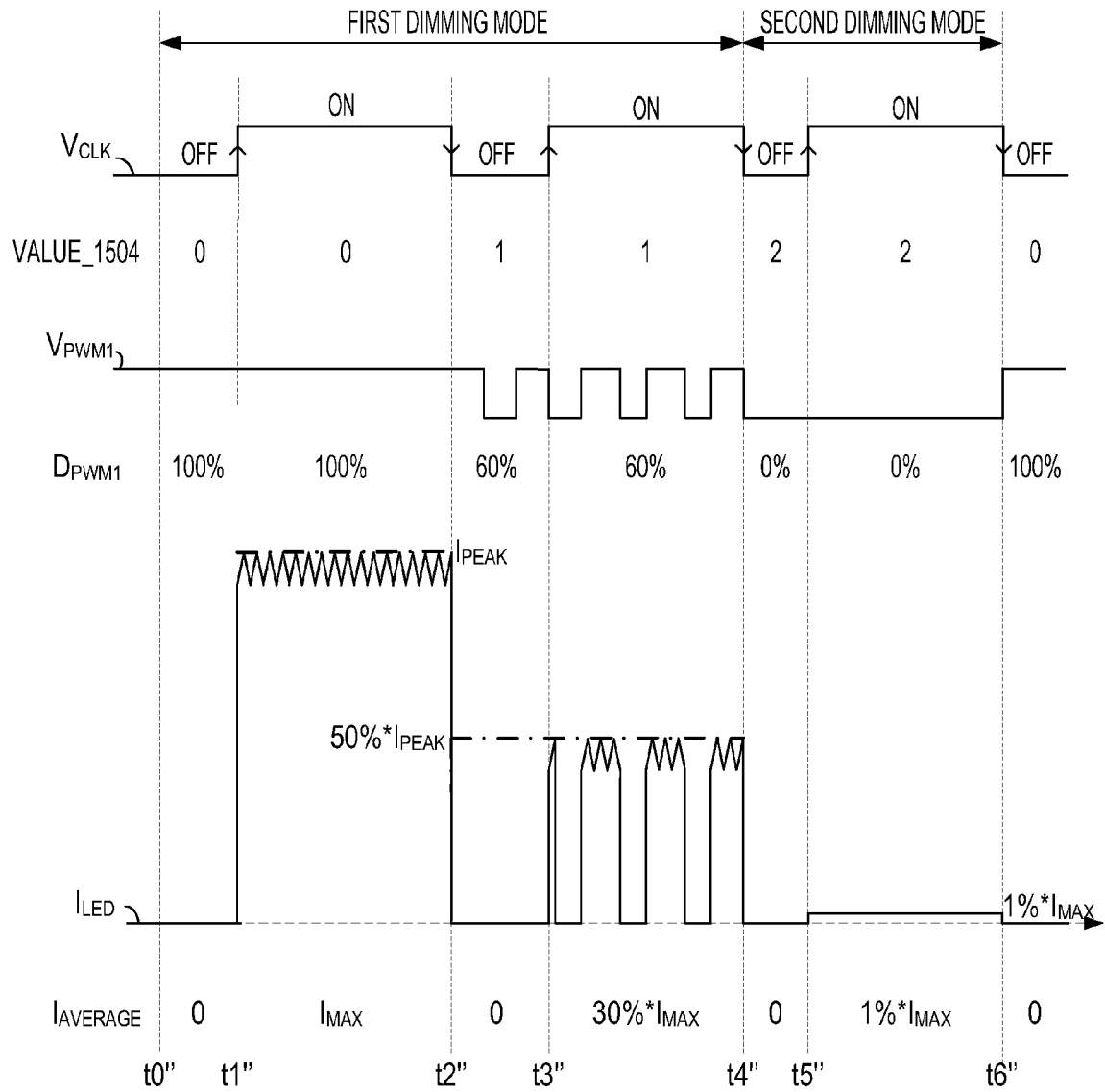


FIG. 21

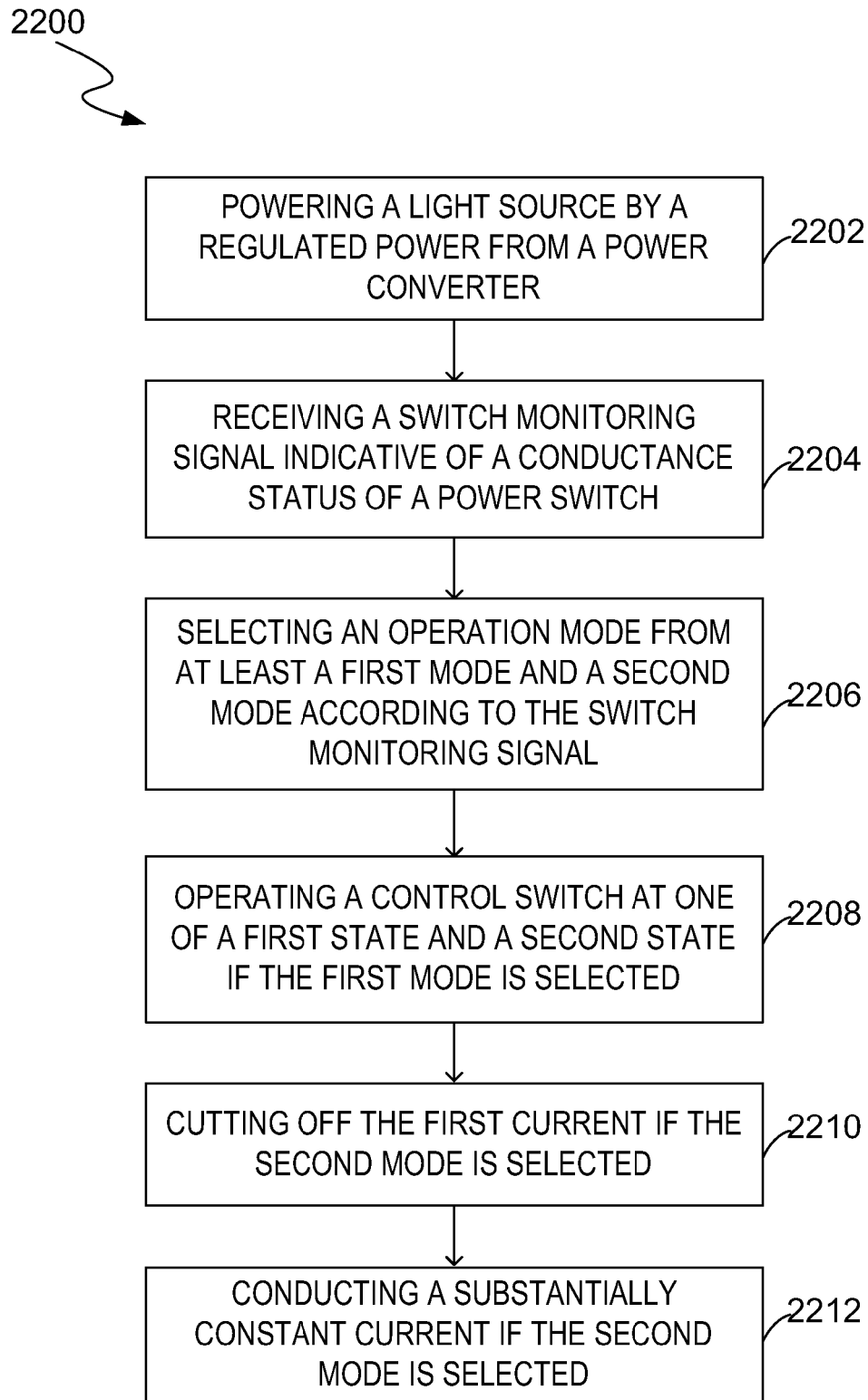


FIG. 22



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 13 15 0915

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	US 2010/148681 A1 (KUO CHING-CHUAN [TW] ET AL) 17 June 2010 (2010-06-17) * the whole document *	1-19	INV. H05B33/08
A	GB 2 482 371 A (CIRRUS LOGIC INC [US]) 1 February 2012 (2012-02-01) * paragraph [0032] - paragraph [0034]; figure 4 *	1-19	
A	US 7 759 881 B1 (MELANSON JOHN L [US]) 20 July 2010 (2010-07-20) * abstract; figure 6 *	1,15,16	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC) H05B
Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 5 December 2013	Examiner Brown, Julian
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

2

EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 13 15 0915

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

05-12-2013

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 2010148681 A1	17-06-2010	TW 201028043 A	16-07-2010
		US 2010148681 A1	17-06-2010
		US 2012112650 A1	10-05-2012

GB 2482371 A	01-02-2012	CN 102347693 A	08-02-2012
		GB 2482371 A	01-02-2012
		US 2012025736 A1	02-02-2012

US 7759881 B1	20-07-2010	NONE	

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

Patent documents cited in the description

- US 10043411 A [0001]
- US 41502809 A [0001]
- US 8076867 B [0001]
- US 31648008 A [0001]
- US 8044608 B [0001]