

# PUBLIC SUBMISSION

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Request for Comments on Discretion to Institute Trials Before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board

**Comment On:** PTO-C-2020-0055-0001

Discretion to Institute Trials Before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board

**Document:** PTO-C-2020-0055-0410

Comment from John Pfanstiehl

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## Submitter Information

**Name:** John Pfanstiehl

**Address:**

448 Harbor Dr S  
Indian Rocks Beach, FL, 33785

**Email:** public1@ij.net

**Phone:** 7276424715

**Submitter's Representative:** John Pfanstiehl

**Organization:** Pfanstiehl Design Works, LLC

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## General Comment

PTAB is destroying faith in the value of US patents for individuals and small businesses. For four decades I've created entirely new products and businesses based on them. The manufacturing companies I founded, VanSteel, Inc and Pro Motorcar Products, Inc., continue to provide good quality US jobs and exports. However, due to PTAB, I now question whether taking the time and money to create, patent and make new products will result only in frustration and financial loss for me if they become successful and are freely copied by others.

The USPTO has granted me about a dozen utility patents that have resulted in successful new products, including digital and optical measuring devices, but I have little desire to continue if my US patents are highly likely to be invalidated after the significant expense of defending them via PTAB.

Thank you for your efforts to remedy the current deficiencies in the USPTO so that it will encourage the development of new products and processes and thereby work to strengthen our

country's economy.

To that end:

I urge adoption of regulations to govern the discretion to institute PTAB trials consistent with the following principles.

#### I: PREDICTABILITY

Regulations must provide predictability. Stakeholders must be able to know in advance whether a petition is to be permitted or denied for policy reasons. To this end regulations should favor objective analysis and eschew subjectivity, balancing, weighing, holistic viewing, and individual discretion. The decision-making should be procedural based on clear rules. Presence or absence of discrete factors should be determinative, at least in ordinary circumstances. If compounded or weighted factors are absolutely necessary, the number of possible combinations must be minimized and the rubric must be published in the Code of Federal Regulations.

#### II: MULTIPLE PETITIONS

- a) A petitioner, real party in interest, and privy of the petitioner should be jointly limited to one petition per patent.
- b) Each patent should be subject to no more than one instituted AIA trial.
- c) A petitioner seeking to challenge a patent under the AIA should be required to file their petition within 90 days of an earlier petition against that patent (i.e., prior to a preliminary response). Petitions filed more than 90 days after an earlier petition should be denied.
- d) Petitioners filing within 90 days of a first petition against the same patent should be permitted to join an instituted trial.
- e) These provisions should govern all petitions absent a showing of extraordinary circumstances approved by the Director, Commissioner, and Chief Judge.

#### III: PROCEEDINGS IN OTHER TRIBUNALS

- a) The PTAB should not institute duplicative proceedings.
- b) A petition should be denied when the challenged patent is concurrently asserted in a district court against the petitioner, real party in interest, or privy of the petitioner and the court has neither stayed the case nor issued any order that is contingent on institution of review.
- c) A petition should be denied when the challenged patent is concurrently asserted in a district court against the petitioner, real party in interest, or privy of the petitioner with a trial is scheduled to occur within 18 months of the filing date of the petition.
- d) A petition should be denied when the challenged patent has been held not invalid in a final determination of the ITC involving the petitioner, real party in interest, or privy of the petitioner.

#### IV: PRIVY

- a) An entity who benefits from invalidation of a patent and pays money to a petitioner challenging that patent should be considered a privy subject to the estoppel provisions of the AIA.
- b) Privy should be interpreted to include a party to an agreement with the petitioner or real party of interest related to the validity or infringement of the patent where at least one of the parties to the agreement would benefit from a finding of unpatentability.

#### V: ECONOMIC IMPACT

Regulations should account for the proportionally greater harm to independent inventors and small businesses posed by institution of an AIA trial, to the extent it harms the economy and integrity of the patent system, including their financial resources and access to effective legal representation.