The topic is restriction practice. It is against PTO policy to restrict when inappropriate to do so. Restriction of distinct but related inventions is inappropriate unless there is a "significant search burden." The significant search burden is usually justified if the two inventions are classified in different classes. However, oftentimes, both classes need to be searched anyway and patents/publications include descriptions and claims directed to both classes.

The restriction process may lend itself to abuse if it is used to simplify an examiner's work load or split work among different art groups, but the impact on a small entity may be tens of thousands of dollars in duplicate filing, issue, and maintenance fees plus legal costs.

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