



PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. GOVERNMENT URGES UTAH BUSINESSES TO PROTECT THEIR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY FROM THEFT OVERSEAS

Small Businesses Especially At Risk, Says U.S. Patent & Trademark Office

Salt Lake City, Utah – U. S. Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property Jon Dudas and U.S. Rep. Chris Cannon (UT-3) today warned a small-business audience that they are increasingly at risk of overseas intellectual property theft -- even if they do not export -- and urged them to take protective action.

In remarks before the “Conference on the Global Intellectual Property Marketplace,” sponsored by the Commerce Department’s U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Dudas and Cannon urged the audience to consider intellectual property protection in the United States and overseas a priority business decision.

“Small-business people were awarded more than half of the patents issued in Utah last year, yet if they haven’t taken steps to protect themselves overseas, they remain vulnerable to having their ideas, their products, and even their good names stolen by someone half a world away,” Dudas said. “The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is sponsoring seminars like this one to arm small businesses with the information they need to protect their intellectual property, which is often the lifeblood of their business.”

“Utah has had a rich heritage of innovation since our earliest days. For decades, we had more patents per capita than any other state, and we are still in the top tier,” said Cannon, who serves on the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Intellectual Property. Last year alone, Utah inventors were awarded 683 utility patents – more than half of which went to small-businessmen and –women.

While piracy, counterfeiting and theft of intellectual property pose a serious threat to all American businesses, small businesses are particularly at risk because they often lack the knowledge and expertise to effectively combat it. Because small businesses typically do not have personnel or maintain large operations in other countries, theft of their intellectual property overseas can go undetected.

The USPTO is hosting a series of seminars across the country to help educate American small businesses about the realities of piracy and counterfeiting. During the two-day seminar (May 23-24, 2005) in Salt Lake City, intellectual property experts from the agency are providing attendees with details and useful tips about protecting and enforcing their intellectual property rights in the United States and around the world.

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The Salt Lake City seminar represents one of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's many efforts to educate small businesses about intellectual property protection. This summer, the agency will unveil a national awareness campaign to provide information to small businesses about when to file for intellectual property protection, what type of protection to file for, where to file and how to go about it. The effort will feature outreach targeted to industry sectors especially at risk of intellectual property theft, a Web site specifically designed to address the needs of small businesses, and informational materials informing small businesses about the problem and steps they can take to mitigate it.

The campaign, in turn, is part of a much larger USPTO and federal government effort. The Strategy Targeting Organized Piracy (STOP!) initiative, also directed at small businesses, aims to combat criminal networks that traffic in fakes, stop trade in pirated and counterfeit goods at America's borders and help small businesses secure and enforce their rights in overseas markets. As part of the initiative, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office maintains a toll-free telephone hotline, 1-866-999-HALT, that helps businesses leverage the resources of the U.S. government to protect their intellectual property rights.

For more information about the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's effort to educate American businesses about intellectual property rights, visit www.uspto.gov.

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