As a long time professional software engineer, it is my belief that software should not be patentable. While working for a large corporation, I was awarded several patents for my inventions, including some software patents, because I was financially motivated by my employer to do so. However, once I started using and contributing to open source software projects, I stopped submitting software inventions for additional patents because patents can greatly reduce the rate and quality of software innovations, which are more beneficial to all when shared by a community working together. Patents make it too easy for a small number of people/corporations to artificially block the progress of technology and interfere with the benefits of software for the larger population. Software technology progress would have been faster without the ever-present threat of patents and the many cases of litigation. The time wasted on, an uncertainty caused by, software patent disputes is harmful to everyone who benefits from software innovation and sharing. Patents primarily benefit those who have the ability to acquire a large number of patents for cross-licensing. Software patents provide little value to an individual inventor who wants to advance the art (vs. block progress for financial gain).

If the original purpose of patents was to encourage people to contribute to the greater good (by giving a short term incentive), the current state of affairs is that the greater good receives a bigger benefit, and sooner, when collaboration and innovation is not slowed by the threat and misuse of patents by a few with selfish short term interests.

Regards,
Michael A. Wright