

**UNITED STATES  
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**



# An overview of the Patent Pro Bono Program

Patent Pro Bono Team

Office of Enrollment and Discipline

United States Patent and Trademark Office

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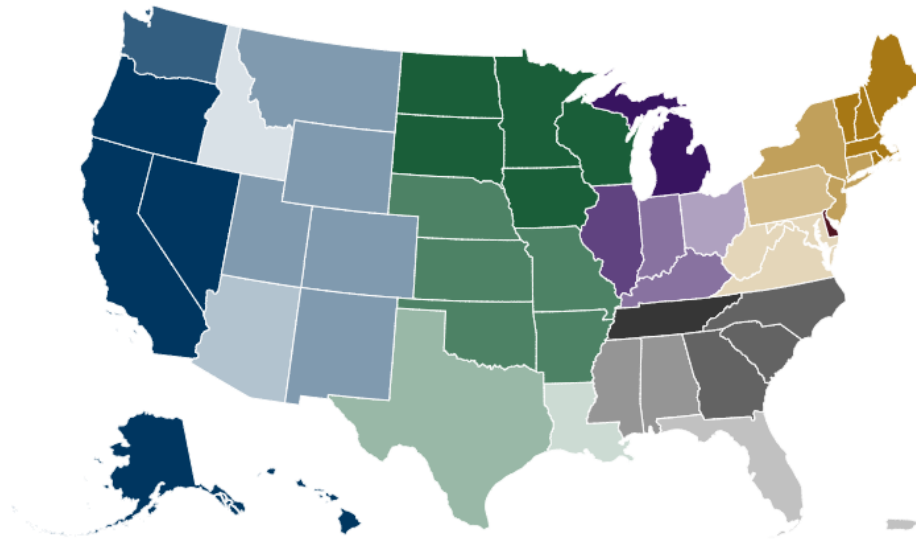
# The Patent Pro Bono Program

- Assists financially under-resourced independent inventors and small businesses
  - Section 32 of AIA – The USPTO’s Director shall work with and support intellectual property law associations across the country in the establishment of pro bono programs designed to assist financially under-resourced independent inventors and small businesses.
  - The USPTO 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan calls for the USPTO to enhance “the assistance we provide to independent inventors and small businesses.”
- 21 regional programs work to match financially under-resourced inventors and small businesses with volunteer practitioners to file and prosecute patent applications.

# Benefits to USPTO and inventors

- Impact for USPTO
  - Increased participation in the patent system
    - Increases patent application filings
  - Improved patent quality
  - Supplements pro se (filing on your own) assistance efforts
- Impact for inventors
  - Opportunity to work with experienced patent practitioners
  - Over \$26.5M in donated legal services provided to inventors from 2015 to present

# Current nationwide coverage



- Washington Pro Bono Patent Network
- Idaho Patent Pro Bono
- California Inventors Assistance Program
- ProBoPat
- Arizona Public Patent Program
- LegalCORPS
- Georgia PATENTS
- Patent Pro Bono FL
- St. Louis U. Pro Bono Patent Program
- Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts
- Louisiana Invents
- Chicago-Kent Patent Hub
- PatentConnect
- Ohio Invents
- Pro Bono Patent Project
- New England Program
- New York Tri State Program
- Delaware Program
- Federal Circuit Bar Assn.
- Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
- Tennessee PATENTS
- BBVLP Patent Program



# Regional patent pro bono programs

- Regional programs may cover individual or multiple states
- Regional programs are operated by
  - Nonprofit organizations focusing on copyright and trademark (e.g., lawyers for the arts)
  - Universities
  - Bar associations
- Regional programs follow general guidelines but are independent of the USPTO and set their own policies and procedures
- Regional programs are responsible for screening and matching patent pro bono applicants:
  - Ensure applicants meet requirements for pro bono assistance
  - Screen for
    - Income
    - Knowledge of the patent system
    - An actual invention (more than an idea)

# General criteria for inventors

- **Gross household income:**
  - Regional program dependent, but usually limited to 300% of the federal poverty guidelines
  - A single person could have an income of up to \$40,770 ([see federal poverty guidelines](#)).
  - The limit increases with additional dependents.
- **Demonstrate knowledge of the patent system:**
  - Have at least a provisional application on file with the USPTO or have completed a [certificate training course](#) (also available in [Spanish](#))
- **Have an invention: more than an idea**
  - To demonstrate that there is an invention one should be able to describe the invention so that someone could make and use the invention.
- **Responsible for all USPTO fees**
  - Micro-entity status provides a 75% reduction on most USPTO patent fees
- **Regional programs may charge an application fee of \$25-\$150**

# Applying to the Patent Pro Bono Program

- To apply:
  - Apply directly with your regional program.
    - To find the regional program that serves you, see [www.uspto.gov/probonopatents](http://www.uspto.gov/probonopatents) for a map of the United States and select your state.
- Email [probono@uspto.gov](mailto:probono@uspto.gov) if you have any questions.



