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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-2020-0055-0481

Comment from Keith Shuman

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General Comment

I am a citizen of the United States and have practiced in the field of engineering as a licensed Engineer for over 30 years. I have been granted an issued US patent which I believed to be of great value by granting me the right of exclusion against others that might infringe against that patent. I spent a considerable amount of effort and resources to obtain this patent and do not believe it should be subjected to invalidation without due process in a court of law. I also believe that the PTAB should not invalidate any patent, but if it finds the existing patent to be flawed in some way(as currently written), the result would have the same result as an "Office Action" from the USPTO. That procedure is routinely performed during a patent review process. The patent would be sent to a qualified reviewer (original reviewer, if possible) to work with the patent holder (and their attorney) to be corrected. If the corrections can be made to the satisfaction of the reviewer, the patent would be reissued with corrections. Invalidation would only occur if the patent could not be corrected to meet the the objections raised in the PTAB.

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.