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January 30, 2012

Hon. David J. Kappos
Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property
and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
600 Dulany Street
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313

Submitted via: satelliteoffices@uspto.gov

Re: IPO Response to the USPTO “Request for Comments on Additional USPTO Satellite Offices for the Nationwide Workforce Program” 76 Fed. Reg. 73601 (November 29, 2011)

Dear Under Secretary Kappos:

Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPO) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) in response to the Request for Comments on Additional USPTO Satellite Offices for the Nationwide Workforce Program published in the Federal Register on November 29, 2011.

IPO is a trade association representing companies and individuals in all industries and fields of technology who own or are interested in intellectual property rights. IPO’s membership includes more than 200 companies and more than 12,000 individuals who are involved in the association either through their companies or as inventor, author, law firm, or attorney members.

IPO supports the USPTO’s continued efforts to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce, reduce patent application pendency and improve quality, and enhance communication between the USPTO and the patent applicant community. There has been great promise of improving quality and efficiency by increasing the availability of examiner interviews at the USPTO. The satellite office program should continue such initiatives to place consideration of applicants at the forefront by making examiners accessible to applicants while still maintaining an effective Supervisory Examiner structure.

While IPO does not endorse any specific site for additional satellite offices, after the Detroit site that already has been selected, IPO believes that proper site selection and a properly defined mission for the satellite offices can help the USPTO improve its operations. Specifically, the USPTO has requested comments on the following five issues:

(1) Increase outreach activities to better connect patent filers and innovators with the USPTO.

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Even with two additional satellite offices, many patent filers will have to travel by air for personal interviews and other in-person meetings with Office personnel. IPO believes that a better connection with patent filers and innovators can be achieved with a satellite office that is more convenient for air travelers from the West Coast than current facilities. IPO believes that site selection criteria should place appropriate weight on the logistics and infrastructure available for air travelers at sites under consideration. Logistics for air travelers will be particularly important if the satellite office is slated to host administrative appeals or post-grant proceedings in which applicants and their representatives will need to appear.

(2) Enhance patent examiner retention.

High quality patent examination requires experienced patent examiners. The Office is likely to retain more experienced examiners by offering geographic diversity of worksites to its examining corps. A satellite office should be more than just a duty center for examiners in the hotelling program. To be effective, IPO believes that satellite patent offices should be located in metropolitan areas which examiners find attractive both for cost of living and quality of life, with the expectation that most examiners would work on-site during business hours to benefit from personal interactions with their colleagues. This would also have the benefit of making examiners more available for interviews with applicants.

(3) Improve recruitment of patent examiners.

IPO supports USPTO's efforts to recruit a geographically diverse examining corps and Administrative Patent Judges for future satellite offices. Sites for satellite patent offices should have not only a locally-available pool of qualified candidates, but also the demonstrated ability to attract skilled IP professionals from outside of the region.

(4) Decrease the number of patent applications awaiting examination.

IPO believes that the efficiency of the examination corps will be improved by providing satellite patent offices with a fully networked infrastructure such that examination workloads can be readily distributed among the offices.

(5) Improve the quality of patent examination.

IPO believes that the overall quality of patent examination can be improved through proper placement and operation of satellite patent offices.

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IPO thanks the USPTO for this opportunity to comment, and would welcome any further dialog and the opportunity to support the Office in establishing satellite patent offices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Phillips', written over the printed name.

Richard Phillips
President