

# Remarks at Patent No. 8 Million Ceremonial Presentation

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**Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank**  
**Remarks at Patent No. 8 Million Ceremonial Presentation**

Thank you, Dave [Kappos], for the kind words. Good morning everyone

I'm delighted that you could all join us for this special presentation.

I especially want to recognize our guest of honor, Robert Greenberg, president and CEO of Second Sight, and our guests from Capitol Hill.

And I want to join Dave in thanking the Smithsonian American Art Museum for sharing this facility with us today.

As many of you may know, this historic building was once the U.S. Patent Office. Constructed 175 years ago, it housed early patent submissions as well as scaled models of proposed inventions, which were required by U.S. law at the time.

It soon became known as the "temple of invention"—and a major tourist attraction. And as an ode to 19th century innovation, this building recently became home again to some of the very models that defined generations of American industry, in an exhibit currently featured on the third floor.

So today's event is something of a homecoming.

We're here this morning to celebrate a milestone in the U.S. patent system—the issuance of Patent Number 8 million to Second Sight Medical Products, Inc.—for an apparatus that enhances visual perception for people blinded by outer retinal degeneration.

We've come a long way since the first patent board chaired by Thomas Jefferson granted just three patents in 1790. And clearly, our nation has benefitted greatly from a system that has brought rewards to both the inventor and the public at large.

Innovative products have blazed the way for progress.

They are the primary source of economic growth, job creation and America's competitiveness in today's global economy.

As President Obama said, we need to out-innovate the rest of the world if we're going to win the future.

An efficiently operating patent system is critical to this goal.

Patents are the currency of innovation, and that currency is in increasingly high demand as is evidenced by the recent surge in multi-billion dollar acquisitions of patent portfolios.

And while patents have long been critical to many sectors of the economy, their value has increased in the technology and smart phone markets, where a single device can entail thousands of individually patented components.

Director Kappos and our PTO team have been working tirelessly to transform the agency to match the pace of change in technology and innovation.

But if the PTO is to speed the movement of job-creating ideas to the marketplace, it's going to take more than internal, administrative reforms alone.

The patent reform now before Congress is an essential tool to bring the patent system and the PTO into the 21st century—and to continue to unleash the innovation, ingenuity and creativity that has made America the envy of the world.

Strong and clear patent rights are especially vital to small and new businesses, which create two out of every three American jobs.

Successful inventors need to secure patent rights to access capital, hire employees and lift their companies off the ground.

Put simply, patents are crucial to creating new jobs, new industries and new economic opportunities for Americans.

So we applaud the Senate for taking up the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act as soon as it returned from recess, and urge swift passage without amendment so the president can sign this bill into law in the coming days in support of American innovation, economic growth and job creation here at home. This legislation will help create a more efficiently operating and cost-effective intellectual property protection system. And ultimately, that will mean more new products getting to the market in a timely way and the creation of new businesses and new jobs powered by those products.

This legislation is vital to the administration's growth-by-innovation strategy.

Specifically, the America Invents Act:

- Allows the PTO to set its own fees to recover the actual costs of the services it provides, and keep and reserve those fees exclusively for the PTO's use—a major part of ensuring that the agency has sufficient funding;

- Enables the PTO to hire more examiners and bring its IT system into the 21st century so it can process applications more quickly and produce higher quality patents that are less likely to be subject to a court challenge;
- Decreases the likelihood of expensive litigation because it creates a less costly, in-house administrative alternative to review patent validity claims; and,
- Adopts the “first-inventor-to-file” standard as opposed to the current “first-to-invent” standard. First inventor to file is used by the rest of the world, and would be good for U.S. businesses, providing a more transparent and cost-effective process that is consistent with the practices of our economic competitors.

Taken together, the reforms outlined in the America Invents Act create a better architecture for fostering American innovation and accelerating the delivery of innovative goods and services to the marketplace.

It also gives the Patent Office the tools and resources it needs to serve America’s innovators by granting high-quality patents in a more timely fashion.

In the face of both a fragile recovery and aggressive global economic competition, it is vitally important that we maintain the flow of new technologies and new ideas into the marketplace.

We simply cannot allow the full power of America’s innovators to go untapped. It is the technological advances of companies like Second Sight—or perhaps a company that’s little more than an idea today—that will drive our nation’s economic progress and global competitiveness.

Along the way, those advances will create jobs and opportunity in communities across the country.

That’s why we need a patent system capable of serving a 21st-century economy. We don’t have time to wait. The PTO is ready to implement reforms that will support the new ideas and new products that create jobs.

Thank you.