

Remarks at Innovation Panel at University of Colorado-Denver Medical Campus, Denver, Colorado

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Acting Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank

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Thank you, Executive Vice Chancellor Marks, Mayor Hancock, and Undersecretary Kappos. It's great to be back in Denver.

I also want to thank Chancellor Elliman, Robb Walt, and Ali Ansary for joining the panel today.

And I know that we have staff here from a number of Congressional offices, including Senators Bennet and Udall, as well as Congresswoman DeGette and Congressmen Tipton, Perlmutter, and Polis. Thank you all.

Last fall, when President Obama signed the America Invents Act, it was a historic moment for America's patent system.

We've come a long way since 1790, when our patent system was created by Congress. At that time, President Washington himself had to sign off on each patent.

Thankfully, it wasn't a big job. That year, there were just three.

Over the years, there have been millions of groundbreaking U.S. patents for new inventions and discoveries that have changed the world.

As everyone on this campus knows, many have been in the field of medicine.

For example, in 1960, we issued patent number 2,937,186. It went to a Colorado-born organic chemist named Robert Seiwald. He figured out how to label the antibodies that attack our body's infections. This discovery turned out to play a central role in helping test for HIV/AIDS.

We would not have reached milestones like the first FDA-approved at-home HIV test (last week) – without his trailblazing work over 60 years ago.

Fast forward to today. For each of the past two years, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has issued over 200,000 patents – more than ever before.

But until this week, there has only been one place where we could do our work – in Alexandria, Virginia – just outside of Washington, D.C.

And I'm proud to say that because of the strong and growing entrepreneurial spirit both here and across the country: the Commerce Department will soon put one of its first four satellite patent offices right here in Denver.

Today, thousands of inventors across the country continue to help lay the foundation for America's long-term growth and leadership.

Already, we have seen 28 straight months of private sector job growth – totaling 4.4 million jobs.

But it's clear that we still have much work to do to dig our way out of the deepest recession since the Great Depression.

What we can do – right now – is make smart, long-term investments that will drive innovation. A stronger, more efficient patent system is one such investment.

Patents are the fuel for innovation. They protect the intellectual property of Americans who have game-changing ideas. They help put those ideas to work in our economy. And they help us out-compete the rest of the world.

That's why Dave Kappos and his team at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office have been running on overdrive these past few years.

And they've made great progress in improving our patent system. For example, even though patent filings grew 5 percent last year, they were able to actually reduce the patent backlog by 10 percent.

That's good news for inventors in states like Colorado, where the number of patents we've issued has increased by 30 percent from 2008 to 2011.

The new office here is going to help us do even more. It will expand the capacity and productivity of our patent system – both here and nationwide.

To run it, we expect to hire about 100 new patent examiners, intellectual property experts, administrative law judges, and others.

And the inventors throughout the region can take advantage of this office. They'll come in and learn to navigate the patent process. They'll meet with examiners in-person and through videoconferencing. They'll be able to search our extensive patent databases, and much more.

And as the new patent office becomes integrated into this community, we'll be able to ask questions that we've never been able to ask before:

- What can we learn from businesses and industries in the Denver area to make our patent system more effective than ever?
- How can our patent system grow through new interactions with regional economic development groups and others who share our mission of helping businesses create jobs?
- And, perhaps eventually: How can we create a tailored suite of IP services for startups, incubators, and accelerators who work in communities like this?

Our vision for this office is to serve Denver – and states throughout this part of the country – better than ever before. We want to put more patents in the hands of enterprising Americans... so that they can – in turn – attract capital and put their business plans into action. Because more patents mean more good jobs.

A recent Commerce Department report showed that industries that rely heavily on intellectual property protection support at least 40 million jobs – and about one-third of our GDP.

But that's not all. That same report showed that these jobs pay about 42 percent higher than others. So a better patent system means good jobs and stronger economic security for millions of middle class families.

But creating a strong life-cycle of innovation requires much more than just a 21st century patent system. There are other pieces of the puzzle, and I just want to mention a few. First, President Obama is calling on Congress to provide more funding for research and development in his 2013 budget. This includes increased support for critical areas like high-tech and advanced manufacturing.

Second, the Commerce Department is helping to lead a commercialization effort with over 200 universities – including the University of Colorado as a whole as well as the Colorado School of Mines. We need to help pull more of their discoveries into the marketplace.

Third, we need to ensure that more bright young people at places like this have the opportunity to enter and succeed in medicine and other science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. That's why the President's new budget proposes increased support for STEM education.

Fourth, we need to make sure that businesses both here and abroad see the clear benefits of investing right here in America. That means fixing our tax system so that we stop providing tax breaks to companies that ship jobs overseas, and start providing tax incentives for our companies to build things stamped with "Made in America".

Clearly, we must continue to use all of the tools at our disposal to ensure that America will continue to drive innovation and be a magnet for good jobs for our middle class.

We need to make sure that researchers can pursue their ideas, and entrepreneurs with good ideas

can successfully start their own small businesses. That helps grow our economy from the bottom up. In other words, let's pave the way for the next Robert Seiwald.

After all, our ability to innovate and compete as a nation will determine what kind of economy – and what kind of country – we pass along to the next generation.

Again, congratulations to the Denver area on their new patent office. And thank you all in advance for helping ensure its success in the coming years.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts in the dialogue that we're about to have, about the things that the US PTO and the US Department of Commerce need to think about and act on to support the business community here in the Denver area.

With a little help from this new patent office, I'm confident that our innovators here and across the country will keep America strong and competitive in the 21st century. Thank you.