



**Remarks by Coke Morgan Stewart for U.S. Inventor Reception
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Thank you so much for having me.

It's great to be here with so many inventors, entrepreneurs, and people who believe in the American patent system.

I especially want to thank US Inventor for the work you do. You give independent inventors a voice in Washington, and frankly, we need that voice now more than ever.

I want to make three quick points tonight.

First, independent inventors and small businesses aren't just part of the American patent system. They're the reason we have a patent system.

The whole idea behind patents is that you don't have to be a giant corporation with an army of lawyers and billions of dollars to compete. You can be one person with a great idea. You can be a startup operating out of a garage. And if you invent something valuable, the law is supposed to protect your invention.

A patent is supposed to level the playing field. It's supposed to give the little guy a fighting chance against the biggest companies in the world.

And that matters for more than just individual inventors. It matters for competition. It matters for jobs. It matters for our economy and our national security.

Because if only the biggest companies can afford to invent and protect their inventions, we're going to miss out on enormous American ingenuity.

Second, our patent system is in crisis. And I don't use that word lightly.

I've had the privilege of serving in leadership at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and I've seen these problems from the inside.

It takes too long to get a patent. Once you get one, you can face seemingly endless challenges. And even if your patent survives, enforcing it can be so expensive that many independent inventors simply can't afford to do it.

Think about what a problem that is.

You spend years developing an invention. You invest your savings. You navigate the patent system. You finally get your patent. And then, if a much larger company uses your invention without permission, you're the one who may have to spend millions of dollars fighting to protect it.

We have created a system where the party with the deepest pockets can have an enormous advantage. And we wonder why inventors are frustrated.

For too long, Washington has been stuck in a debate about patent trolls and bad patents. Meanwhile, the pendulum has swung so far against patent owners that we've lost sight of what the system is supposed to accomplish.

We need to start asking a different question: How do we make sure a patent is actually worth something to the person who earned it?

Third, Congress needs to act.

We have an enormous opportunity right now. There is growing recognition that our patent system needs reform, and we have an opportunity to come together and actually get meaningful reforms across the finish line.

We don't have to agree on every issue. But surely we can agree that inventors deserve a patent system that works. One where patents are reliable, where inventors aren't subjected to endless challenges, and where enforcing your rights doesn't require millions of dollars.

And this is especially important for the people in this room. Independent inventors and small businesses need to be at the table. Your experiences should help shape these reforms, because you know better than anyone what happens when the system doesn't work.

The USPTO is doing what it can, but it cannot solve these problems alone. We need Congress to finish the job.

And the stakes couldn't be higher.

We're competing with China for technological leadership in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and technologies critical to our national security.

We cannot afford to let short-term interests or disagreements over individual lawsuits stand in the way of fixing a system that is so important to our country's future.

I'll leave you with this.

We talk a lot in Washington about supporting small businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship, and making America the world's innovation leader. Well, here's our chance to put those words into action.

Because the true test of our patent system isn't whether it works for a company with a billion-dollar legal budget. It's whether it works for the independent inventor sitting right here in this room.

Let's come together, get these reforms across the finish line, and make sure America remains a country where the next great inventor has a fighting chance. Thank you, and I look forward to a terrific conference tomorrow!