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Minnesota to Pioneer Pro Bono Patents

February 11, 2011—MINNEAPOLIS—Members of the Twin Cities legal community are launching a pilot program to provide pro bono legal services to low-income, independent inventors. The group is working with encouragement from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and the program's success may help spark innovation and new businesses in Minnesota and across the nation.

"The independent inventor community fuels innovation, which draws investments, creates new businesses and provides new jobs," said Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, David Kappos. "Providing assistance to these inventors is an excellent investment toward economic growth in the United States. We applaud the Twin Cities legal community for taking on this important initiative"

"Cost is the biggest hurdle for independent inventors," said Jim Patterson, managing partner of Patterson Thuente IP and member of the project steering committee. "A project like this allows people with good ideas to overcome at least one of the financial roadblocks to bringing a new innovation to market."

The partners in this project include nonprofit legal services provider, LegalCORPS, and the law firms of Lindquist & Vennum, Meyers & Njus and Patterson Thuente IP. LegalCORPS will ultimately facilitate the program by handling intake screening, client and volunteer attorney matching, and other case-related administrative tasks.

The mission of the Minnesota group is to develop a pilot program that can be replicated across the country, matching inventors with qualified IP professionals willing to share their expertise.

"Ranking among the top 10 states for patent filings and holding a national reputation for pro bono work, Minnesota is the perfect place to launch such a program," said Candee Goodman, pro bono director at Lindquist & Vennum and member of the project steering committee. Goodman, a recognized leader in the Twin Cities pro bono community, added that the patent bar has been asking for pro bono opportunities that utilize their specialized skills.

The program also aims to put an additional dent in the USPTO's backlog of more than 700,000 patent applications. Giving unrepresented patent applicants legal counsel prior to filing will likely improve the quality of pro se applications, making processing those applications more efficient.

The project is currently in the final planning stages. The program will be administered by LegalCORPS with a part-time professional as the program administrator.

About LegalCORPS

LegalCORPS is a nonprofit organization that matches qualified small businesses located throughout Minnesota with volunteer lawyers who provide pro bono legal services in business law matters. Founded in 2004, LegalCORPS serves more than 500 small businesses each year.

About Lindquist & Vennum

Lindquist & Vennum is a law firm of 200 attorneys who provide a full array of corporate finance, transactional and litigation services for clients. From its offices in Minnesota and Colorado, the firm has served corporate, governmental and individual clients across the nation for nearly 40 years.

About Meyer & Njus, PA

For more than 35 years Meyer & Njus has represented its clients in legal matters related to business, business litigation and consumer collections from the firm's offices in Minnesota, Illinois and Michigan. The firm's goal is to represent clients in the most effective and efficient manner possible, always keeping in mind its clients' objectives.

About Patterson Thunte IP

Patterson Thunte IP helps creative and inventive clients worldwide protect, and profit from, their ideas. Practicing in the areas of patents, trademark, copyright, trade secrets, IP litigation, international IP protection, licensing and post-grant proceedings, the firm's attorneys excel at finding strategic solutions to complex intellectual property matters.

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