



## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

### **Patent and Trademark Office**

**[Docket No. PTO-P-2024-0022]**

### **Patent and Trademark Public Advisory Committees**

**AGENCY:** United States Patent and Trademark Office, Commerce.

**ACTION:** Request for nominations for the Patent and Trademark Public Advisory Committees.

**SUMMARY:** The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)—America’s Innovation Agency—is seeking nominations for up to three members of its Patent Public Advisory Committee (PPAC) to advise the Director of the USPTO on patent policy, and for up to three members of its Trademark Public Advisory Committee (TPAC) to advise the Director on trademark policy. Each new member, who can serve remotely, will serve a three-year term starting December 1, 2024. The members represent the interests of the public and the stakeholders of the USPTO.

**DATES:** Nominations must be electronically transmitted on or before July 5, 2024.

**ADDRESSES:** Persons wishing to submit nominations will be required to electronically complete the appropriate Public Advisory Committee application form by entering detailed information and qualifications at <https://bit.ly/4d9MIQy> for the PPAC and <https://bit.ly/4aKhecY> for the TPAC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Shirin Bidel-Niyat, Chief of Staff, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, at 571-272-8600.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On November 29, 1999, the President signed into law the Patent and Trademark Office Efficiency Act (1999 Act). The 1999 Act

established two Public Advisory Committees—the PPAC and the TPAC—to review the policies, goals, performance, budget, and user fees of the USPTO. The America Invents Act Technical Corrections set staggered terms for the members of the Advisory Committees, with each term starting and ending on December 1.

The PPAC and TPAC members shall:

- Advise the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO on matters involving the policies, goals, performance, budget, and user fees of the USPTO related to patents and trademarks, respectively (35 U.S.C. 5); and
- Within 60 days after the end of each fiscal year: (1) prepare an annual report on the matters listed above; (2) transmit the report to the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary), the President, and the Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House of Representatives; and (3) publish the report in the USPTO’s Official Gazette. *Id.*

### **Public Advisory Committees**

The Public Advisory Committees are each composed of nine voting members who are appointed by the Secretary and serve at the pleasure of the Secretary for three-year terms. Members are eligible for reappointment for a second consecutive three-year term. The Public Advisory Committee members must be citizens of the United States. Members must also certify that they are not required to register with the Department of Justice as a foreign agent under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended, and that they are not a federally-registered lobbyist. Members are chosen to represent the interests of diverse users of the USPTO and must represent small- and large-entity applicants located in the United States in proportion to the number of applications filed by such applicants. In no case, however, shall members who represent

small-entity patent applicants, including small business concerns, independent inventors, and nonprofit organizations, constitute less than 25% of the members of the PPAC. There must also be at least one independent inventor on the PPAC. The Committees must include individuals with a “substantial background and achievement in finance, management, labor relations, science, technology, and office automation.” 35 U.S.C. 5(b)(3). Each of the Public Advisory Committees also includes three non-voting members representing each labor organization recognized by the USPTO.

### ***Procedures and Guidelines of the PPAC and the TPAC***

Each newly appointed member of the PPAC and the TPAC will serve for a three-year term that begins on December 1, 2024, and ends on December 1, 2027. As required by the 1999 Act, members of the PPAC and the TPAC will receive compensation for each day (including travel time) they attend meetings or engage in the business of their Committee. The enabling statute states that members are to be compensated at the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay in effect for level III of the Executive Schedule under 5 U.S.C. 5314. Committee members are compensated on an hourly basis, calculated at the daily rate. While away from home or their regular place of business, each member shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5703.

### ***Applicability of Certain Ethics Laws***

Public Advisory Committee members are Special Government Employees within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. 202. The following additional information includes several, but not all, of the ethics rules that apply to members, and assumes that members are not engaged in Public Advisory Committee business more than 60 days during any period of 365 consecutive days.

- Each member will be required to file a confidential financial disclosure form within 30 days of appointment. 5 CFR 2634.202(c), 2634.204, 2634.903, and 2634.904(b).
- Each member will be subject to many of the public integrity laws, including criminal bars against representing a party in a particular matter that comes before the member's committee and that involves at least one specific party. 18 U.S.C. 205(c); see also 18 U.S.C. 207 for post-membership bars. Also, a member must not act on a matter in which the member (or any of certain closely related entities) has a financial interest. 18 U.S.C. 208.
- Representation of foreign interests may also raise issues. 35 U.S.C. 5(a)(1) and 18 U.S.C. 219.

### ***Meetings of the PPAC and the TPAC***

Meetings of each Public Advisory Committee will take place at the call of the respective Committee Chair to consider an agenda set by that Chair. Meetings may be conducted in person, telephonically, online, or by other appropriate means. The meetings of each Public Advisory Committee will be open to the public, but each Public Advisory Committee may, by majority vote, meet in an executive session when considering personnel, privileged, or other confidential information. Nominees must have the ability to participate in Public Advisory Committee business through the internet.

**Katherine K. Vidal,**

*Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.*