



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION of
REALTORS®

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September 7, 2011

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 1.1 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR), we are pleased to support H.R. 1249, the America Invents Act. NAR, whose members identify themselves as REALTORS®, represents a wide variety of real estate industry professionals. REALTORS® have been early adopters of technology and are industry innovators who understand that consumers today are seeking real estate information and services that are fast, convenient and comprehensive. Increasingly, technology innovations are driving the delivery of real estate services and the future of REALTORS® businesses.

The nation's patent law system faces many of the same issues but has not kept pace. It has been more than 50 years since the patent system's last major overhaul. Modernization is critically needed to improve the quality of issued patents, reduce the burden of unnecessary litigation on businesses, and refocus the nation's efforts on innovation and job creation.

As technology users, NAR and several of its members currently find themselves facing onerous patent infringement litigation over questionable patents launched by patent holding companies and other non-practicing entities. Without needed reforms that assure that asserted patent rights are legitimate, the ability of businesses owned by REALTORS®, many of which are small businesses, to grow, innovate and better serve modern consumers will be put at risk. For this reason, NAR supports reforms such as expanded post-grant review and prior user rights.

The America Invents Act contains needed reforms geared towards improving patent quality. NAR supports greater transparency in the patent application process including creating a mechanism to allow practitioners with the expertise and knowledge to review and comment on the appropriateness of a patent application prior to the issuance of the patent and the creation of a streamlined and more effective process for challenging a patent outside of the judicial system. Finally, it is critically important that the U.S. Patent Trademark Office have access to all user fees paid to the agency by patent and trademark applicants. Without this reform, delays in processing patent applications will continue to undermine American innovation.

Sincerely,

Ron Phipps, ABR, CRS, GRI, GREEN, e-PRO, SFR
2011 President, National Association of REALTORS®



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