

Notice of Town Hall Meeting on the Protection of Industrial Designs

A town hall meeting on the protection of industrial designs will be held **June 16, 2008**, at the **United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)** in **Alexandria, Virginia**.

In the United States, design patents can protect the ornamental appearance of articles of manufacture such as automobiles. The automotive industry, for example, invests millions of dollars creating unique and distinctive designs for motor vehicles. Other consumer products from high technology mobile phones to strollers and infant carriers rely heavily upon product design in developing a strong product line. As a result, intellectual property (IP) protection is considered an extremely important tool to ensure companies with a significant investment in design and product development see a return on their investment.

While the automotive industry is interested in strong IP protection for their creative efforts, other industry and consumer groups argue that IP protection of automotive designs may be contrary to the public interest. For example, insurance companies, consumer groups and independent spare parts producers argue that the public interest is best served by eliminating design patent protection of spare parts so as to limit costs associated with the repair of damaged vehicles. Responding to the concerns of the insurance industry, design protection is being examined by lawmakers, and legislation has been introduced that would amend title 35 of the United States Code to create an exception from infringement for certain component parts used to repair another article. The legislation would apply to the repair of vehicles, as well as consumer products such as coffee makers, drill bits for drills and other machine parts.

This event will give the USPTO an opportunity to hear firsthand the concerns of those who have a stake in the intellectual property laws surrounding industrial designs, and follows a visit to Dearborn, Michigan, to hear the perspectives of the automotive industry. The USPTO would like to obtain all perspectives on these issues to assess and evaluate the interests and needs of stakeholders. Accordingly, the town hall meeting is for members of the public, the business community such as the auto industry and insurance companies, independent parts manufacturers, organizations representing business, consumer and other groups, patent attorneys, patent agents, and independent inventors or anyone else interested in protection of industrial designs.

LOCATION OF MEETING: Global Intellectual Property Academy, United States Patent and Trademark Office, Madison East Building, 600 Dulany Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

DATE and TIME of MEETING: The meeting will be held on June 16, 2008, from 1:00 p. m. to 4:00 p.m.

TO ATTEND: Before June 11, 2008, those interested in presenting oral comments should call Corine Gore or Karin Ferriter at (571) 272-9300, or e-mail Karin Ferriter at

Karin.Ferriter@uspto.gov, and provide your name, telephone number and organization, if any.

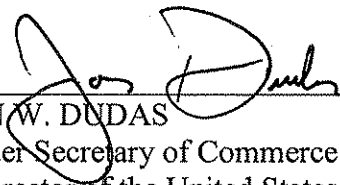
TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS: Written comments should be submitted before July 15, 2008. The comments should be mailed to: Mail Stop External Affairs, Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.

Written comments may be made available via the USPTO's Internet Web site at <http://www.uspto.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Karin Ferriter, by telephone at (571) 272-9300, by mail addressed to: Mail Stop External Affairs, Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, or by facsimile to (571) 273-7744.

5/28/08

Date



JON W. DUDAS

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