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September 30, 2011

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Rebecca M. Blank
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Secretary Blank:

I am writing because of information that I have received about spending related to an intellectual property conference in Tokyo, Japan, which is scheduled for late October 2011. I am concerned about the amount of taxpayer dollars spent by Administrative agencies for conferences, seminars and travel, especially during this time of fiscal constraint.

The website for the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals (CAFC) states that the conference is part of an "International Series" of conferences that was developed in November 2010 to "look for the 'best practices in legal systems' worldwide and 'how those practices—both in terms of governance and the practice of law—relate to innovation and the betterment of societies.'" The website lists the Department of Commerce and the United States Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) among those funding the conferences. It is my understanding that the USPTO is spending approximately \$189,600 to sponsor the Tokyo conference.

According to information I have received from a whistleblower, the USPTO will be sending at least four participants to the Tokyo conference, including its Director, Deputy Director and its Deputy General Counsel and the CAFC will be sending as many as eight participants including: the Chief Judge of the court, five other Circuit Judges, the Circuit Executive and Clerk of the court.

Consequently, I have a number of questions about the Tokyo conference, other conferences sponsored by USPTO and/or its affiliate, the Global Intellectual Property

Academy (GIPA), and the amount of government funds being spent on travel by the USPTO. Accordingly, please respond to the following requests for information:

1. Has the USPTO previously sponsored or is it committed to sponsor any of the conferences in the International Series? If so, for each such conference, set forth the date(s), location, title and subject matter. Also, for each such conference, set forth how much the USPTO paid or is planning to pay to be a sponsor.
2. Has the USPTO paid for any of its employees to attend any of the past conferences in the International Series? If so, for each such conference, identify by name and title, the employee(s) who attended. Also, for each such conference identify the date(s), location, title and subject matter. Finally, for each such conference, set forth how much the USPTO paid for the employee(s) to attend, broken down by (a) conference fees, (b) travel expenses, (c) hotel expenses, (d) meals and (e) other expenses.
3. Is the USPTO planning to pay for any of its employees to attend the Tokyo conference? If so, identify by name and title, the employee(s) who are scheduled to attend. Also, set forth how much the USPTO is planning to spend in connection with its employees attending, broken down by: (a) conference fees, (b) travel expenses, (c) hotel expenses, (d) meals and (e) other expenses.
4. If you submit your responses after the Tokyo conference has taken place and employees attended, identify by name and title, the employee(s) who actually attended, if any. Also, if applicable, set forth how much the USPTO actually paid for the employee(s) to attend, broken down by (a) conference fees, (b) travel expenses, (c) hotel expenses, (d) meals and (e) other expenses.
5. Other than the Tokyo conference, is the USPTO planning on paying to have any of its employees attend any of the other conferences in the International Series? If so, for each such conference, identify by name and title, the employee(s) who are scheduled to attend. If specific individuals are not yet scheduled to attend, for each conference set forth how many individuals the USPTO is planning on paying for. Also, for each such conference identify the date(s), location, title and subject matter. Finally, for each such conference, set forth how much the USPTO is planning to pay for its employee(s) to attend, broken down by (a) conference fees, (b) travel expenses, (c) hotel expenses, (d) meals and (e) other expenses.
6. During the last three years, has the USPTO sponsored any conferences or seminars? If so, for each such conference or seminar, set forth the date(s), location, title and subject matter. Also, for each such conference or seminar, set forth how much the USPTO paid to be a sponsor.
7. During the last three years, has the USPTO paid for any of its employees to attend a conference or seminar? If so, for each such conference or seminar, set forth the date(s), location, title and subject matter. And for each such conference/seminar, identify by name and title, the employee(s) who attended. Also, for each

conference or seminar, set forth how much the USPTO paid for the employee(s) to attend, broken down by (a) conference fees, (b) travel expenses, (c) hotel expenses, (d) meals and (e) other expenses.

8. During the next three years, is the USPTO planning to sponsor any conferences or seminars? If so, for each such conference or seminar, set forth the date(s), location, title and subject matter. Also, for each such conference or seminar, set forth how much the USPTO is planning to pay to be a sponsor.
9. During the next three years, is the USPTO planning to pay for any of its employees to attend a conference or seminar? If so, for each such conference or seminar, set forth the date(s), location, title and subject matter. Also, for each such conference or seminar, set forth how much the USPTO is planning to pay for its employee(s) to attend. If possible break down those amounts by: (a) conference fees, (b) travel expenses, (c) hotel expenses, (d) meals and (e) other expenses.
10. Does the USPTO have a policy governing its sponsorship of conferences or seminars? If so, and if that policy is in writing, provide a copy of the document. If the USPTO has a policy but it is not in writing, set forth the policy and explain why it is not a written policy.
11. Does the USPTO have a policy governing its paying for its employees to attend conferences or seminars? If so, and if that policy is in writing, provide a copy of the document. If the USPTO has a policy but it is not in writing, set forth the policy and explain why it is not a written policy.

These are basic questions, the answers to which should be readily available. Please respond in writing by October 14, 2011.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Janet Drew or Tristan Leavitt of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member