

leader, will not affirm that we need to make these choices because it is a serious threat to America. Admiral Mullen, who is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has stated that the greatest threat to our security is the national debt. Every expert tells us that the greatest threat to our country is the debt. In my opinion, it dwarfs any other threat this Nation faces. Yet according to the Associated Press, the President's speech is going to talk about spending and nothing about how to deal with the debt, or nothing significant about that.

So the rhetoric needs to confront reality. The President has given a number of speeches about creating jobs and reducing the deficit. But a speech is no substitute for a budget or for a detailed plan. The only plan the President has ever put on paper—the only plan that can be reviewed by the press, the public, and Congress—is his February budget. He reaffirmed that plan last week, sending Congress a midsession review that made no policy changes in his budget he submitted earlier. He had the 500-person Office of Management and Budget staff working for him. Is it too much to ask for a real plan? Whatever he may say on Thursday night, on paper—officially—he remains committed to this budget plan that grows the debt by about \$12 trillion and raises taxes by about \$2 trillion. What it does is it increases spending and increases taxes significantly, but the increase in spending is greater than the increase in taxes. So the net result is that the President's plan makes the budget projections we have from the Congressional Budget Office worse than they would be if we didn't have this budget plan.

America needs the confidence that only a concrete plan can provide. The constant threat of more Federal taxing, borrowing, and regulating undermines confidence, certainty, and predictability in our economy, that which our economy so desperately needs.

This isn't a question simply of ideology; it is a question of leadership. We need and have to grow the economy, not the government. We need to grow the economy. America needs a budget plan that recognizes a core truth. Our Nation's strength does not lie in the size of our government, but in the scope of our freedoms and in the creativity of our people. We need to focus on policies that unleash the enormous productive potential of the private sector. We need to focus on policies that remove instability fostered by the President's refusal to put forward a coherent economic plan that will actually reduce debt, not make it worse, and that would end the threat of high taxes and improve conditions for our job creators. Instead of the failed tax-and-spend approach the voters rejected in the last election, we need to focus on policies that create jobs—not more bureaucracy—helping to steady the economy in these difficult, uncertain times. That would include such things as en-

ergy production. We have definitely damaged and delayed significantly the production of energy in the gulf far beyond what was necessary. Only now is it beginning to come back. We are having incredibly increased regulations of every kind on our economy, and we have failed to undertake the kind of serious tax reform that could help create growth and productivity. So these are very dangerous things.

I wish to remind our colleagues that the debt problem can't all be blamed on President Bush. I was a critic of some of his spending programs. But, for example, in the last 3 years of President Bush's plans compared to the first 3 years of President Obama's, he has increased spending for education 67 percent. His budget for the next fiscal year beginning October 1, which was defended a few weeks ago in the Appropriations Committee, calls for a 13.5-percent increase in the Education Department. His budget plan calls for a 10.5-percent increase in the Energy Department. I affectionately call them the Department of Anti-Energy, the Anti-Energy Department. The State Department is looking at a 10.5-percent increase. At a time when we are borrowing 40 cents of every dollar we spend, how can this be reality? Now we are talking about \$300 billion which will be thrown in on top of this to stimulate the economy again. I hope and trust there are some things the government can do to improve the economy, but I am afraid we are at a point where borrowing more money is not one of them.

Look what the Europeans have done. They are facing a similar crisis. Do they think they should borrow more and spend more? Is that what they are doing? No. They are taking their medicine. Italy is attempting to pass a \$65 billion austerity plan that would balance their budget by 2013. The budget the President submitted to us does not even come close to balancing in 10 years. In fact, the projected annual 1-year deficit under the President's plan for the tenth year of his 10-year budget is \$1 trillion plus. The highest budget deficit President Bush ever had was \$450 billion. He will average almost \$1 trillion a year—\$1,000 billion average—over 10 years. The interest payment last year was \$240 billion. The CBO projects in the tenth year after President Obama has doubled the deficit based on his budget, interest in 1 year will be \$840 billion, crowding out things such as aid to education, which is \$100 billion, Federal aid to highways, \$40 billion.

We cannot continue on this path. Italy is making a change. What about Spain? These are three of the so-called "PIGS" in Europe, the ones that are in financial trouble. Spain is planning a constitutional amendment and complementary law that will require close to balanced budgets at the Federal and State levels and to limit Federal debt to 60 percent of their economy. The enacted austerity plan reduces salaries of

public sector workers and cuts public sector spending.

Portugal has a 4-year consolidation plan that will reduce Federal spending by 7 percent of GDP and would balance the budget by 2015. We have no plan to balance the budget, nothing close to it. Indeed, the plan the President has submitted to us—and I am not exaggerating. This is in the record books. We have the two-volume budget he sent to us, and it has been analyzed by the Congressional Budget Office. It will average \$1 trillion a year in deficits, which I suppose is why, when I brought it up, the Senate voted 97 to 0 to reject the budget. We do not have one. That is the only one that is pending.

Our Democratic colleagues cancelled the budget markup in the Budget Committee in which I am the ranking Republican—we never even pretended to produce a budget this year. Senator REID, the majority leader, said it would be "foolish" to do so.

So we are now looking at a crisis that involves millions of Americans, the jobs they, hopefully, have now and hope to continue, and those who have lost their jobs. Unemployment has almost doubled. So we are facing a difficult time. I know the pressure is on to just do something so we can politically say we did something. But that is not sufficient now. We need mature, strong, detailed leadership, a detailed plan that will put us on a path to a sound economy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. We need a plan. I hope the President will do more than the article in the newspaper says and provide the kind of specific leadership that can help us move forward from the economic difficulties we face.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEAHY-SMITH AMERICA INVENTS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1249, which the clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1249, an act to amend title 35, United States Code, to provide for patent reform.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, every time I hear discussion about how we balance the budget, especially coming from the other side of the aisle—maybe because I have been here long enough—I remember the last time we did balance the budget during President Clinton's term. We balanced the budget. We

created an amazing surplus. We created millions and millions of new jobs.

But you know what. Not a single Republican voted for that. It passed in the Senate only because the Vice President of the United States cast the deciding vote. No Republican voted—we actually had to do more than just have a bumper sticker “Let’s Balance the Budget.” We actually did balance the budget, which required some very tough choices. No Republican voted for that.

In fact, they all condemned it saying: This would bring about wrack and ruin, and on and on. It did not. It created an enormous budget surplus and created 22 million new jobs. We were paying down the national debt. We left a very large surplus to President Clinton’s successor, President Bush, who immediately wasted it on a needless war in Iraq and tax cuts, both of which I voted against.

It is also interesting to be lectured by the other side of the aisle about balancing the budget when they voted to go into two of the longest wars in our history, and for the first time in our history voted to pay for them by borrowing the money. Now look where trillions of dollars will have gone because of Iraq and Afghanistan, and now to be told that to continue to pay for unnecessary wars we must cut out things for Americans such as education, medical care, housing, scientific research, and things such as finding cures for cancer, Alzheimer’s, repairing our aging bridges, roads—even hearing a Member of the other body saying: We cannot respond to the tragedies caused by Irene in the distinguished Presiding Officer’s home State, mine and others, unless we take the money from other needs in this country. Yet that same Member supported an unnecessary war in Iraq and supports paying for it on the credit card. Come on. Let’s be real. Let’s start thinking about things in America.

The Senate began debate last night on the America Invents Act. Unfortunately, as has happened so many times, we had to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to something that has strong support. I would note that 93 Senators, Republicans and Democrats alike, voted to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed.

This is a bipartisan consensus bill. It is largely similar to the legislation the Senate passed in March. Incidentally, we passed that on a vote of 95 to 5. Some would say these days that we cannot even have a vote like that on a resolution saying the Sun rises in the east. Here Republicans and Democrats came together 95 to 5. The Senate can and should move immediately to pass this bill. It will create good jobs. It will encourage innovation. It will strengthen our recovering economy, and it will not cost the taxpayers anything.

I want to commend Senator HATCH, the longtime Republican lead sponsor of this measure; Senator GRASSLEY, the ranking Republican on the Senate Ju-

diciary Committee; and Senator KYL, the Republican whip, for their support of the bill and for their commitment to making patent reform become a reality.

This is an effort we have worked on for nearly 6 years. I sometimes shudder to think of the amount of time my staff and I have spent on this issue. During those 6 years it has become even more important to the economy. The time has come to enact this bipartisan, bicameral legislation.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Statement of Administration Policy on H.R. 1249 from the Obama administration.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 1249—AMERICA INVENTS ACT

(Rep. Smith, R-Texas, and 5 cosponsors,
June 21, 2011)

The Administration supports House passage of H.R. 1249 as modified by the Manager’s Amendment, but final legislative action must ensure that fee collections fully support the Nation’s patent and trademark system.

The bill’s much-needed reforms to the Nation’s patent system will speed deployment of innovative products to market and promote job creation, economic growth, and U.S. economic competitiveness—all at no cost to American taxpayers. The bill represents a balanced and well-crafted effort to enhance the services to patent applicants and America’s innovators provided by the United States Patent and Trademark Office, USPTO. It does so by supporting the USPTO’s efforts to improve patent quality and reduce the backlog of patent applications, reducing domestic and global patenting costs for U.S. companies, providing greater certainty with respect to patent rights, and offering effective administrative alternatives to costly and complex litigation.

By adopting a first-inventor-to-file system, the bill simplifies the process of acquiring intellectual property rights. This provision provides greater certainty for innovators, reduces legal costs that often burden small businesses and independent inventors, and makes it easier for innovators to market their inventions in the global marketplace. This legislation also provides authority for the USPTO to establish and adjust its fees to reflect the actual costs of the services it provides. In addition, the Manager’s Amendment provides important authority for a 15 percent surcharge on patent fees and additional fees for “fast-track” patent applications, which will enable the USPTO to reduce the backlog. Finally, to increase the quality and certainty of patent rights and offer cost-effective, timely alternatives to district court litigation, the Administration also supports provisions in the legislation that would enhance the opportunities for post-grant review of patents by the USPTO.

To carry out the new mandates of the legislation and reduce delays in the patent application process, the USPTO must be able to use all the fees it collects to serve the users who pay those fees. In this light, the Administration is concerned that Section 22 of the Manager’s Amendment to H.R. 1249 does not by itself ensure such access. The Administration looks forward to working with Congress to provide additional direction that makes clear that the USPTO will have timely access to all of the fees collected,

subject to the congressional oversight provisions in the bill.

House passage of H.R. 1249 would foster innovation, improve economic competitiveness, and create jobs at no expense to taxpayers—all of which are key Administration goals. The Administration looks forward to working with Congress to finalize this important bipartisan legislation and ensure that the USPTO can effectively accomplish its mission to support America’s innovators.

Mr. LEAHY. The statement describes the bill as a balanced and well-crafted effort to enhance the services to patent applicants and America’s innovators provided by the U.S. Patent Office.

The Statement of Administration Policy emphasizes the bill supports the USPTO’s efforts to improve patent quality, reduce the backlog of patent applications, reducing domestic and global costs for U.S. companies. I underscore these points because they are exactly the goals Chairman SMITH of the other body and I set out to achieve when we first introduced patent reform legislation 6 years ago. It has been over half a century since our patent laws were updated.

Look at the changes that have occurred during that time. We have become even more of a global economy than ever before. We have become more of an innovative economy than ever before. Improving patent quality will benefit businesses across the economic spectrum. The America Invents Act will improve patent quality by expanding the role of third parties to the patent examination process, creating a streamlined first-window, postgrant review to quickly challenge and weed out patents that never should have been issued in the first place.

It improves the funding mechanism for the Patent Office to confront its backlog of nearly 700,000 patent applications. Those are patents that could be creating jobs and improving our economy. For years, low-quality patents have been a drain on our patent system, and in turn our economy, by undermining the value of what it means to hold a patent. Higher quality patents will bring greater certainty in the patent system. That is going to make it easier to get investment in American businesses, create jobs, and grow our economy. This act is bipartisan legislation. It is going to lead to long-needed improvements in our patent system and laws. I would note that no one Senator, no industry, no interest group, got everything it wanted in this bill. I suggested that if we were going to write this bill exactly the way we wanted in this body, we would have 100 separate bills. But we can only pass one. That is the nature of compromise.

This bill represents a significant step forward in preparing the Patent Office and, in turn businesses, to deal with the challenges of the 21st century. Support for the bill has grown over time. It is now endorsed by an extensive list of supporters across the political spectrum. Look at who we have here. How often do you see this kind of a breakdown?

The National Association of Manufacturers, the United Steelworkers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Association of American Universities, the American Intellectual Property Law Association, Coalition for the 21st Century Patent Reform, Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council, the National Retail Federation, the Financial Services Roundtable, the American Bar Association, the United Inventors Association of America, the Association of Competitive Technology, the Association of University Technology Managers, the Information Technology Council, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, and so many more.

I cannot remember a time in my years in the Senate where we have seen such a broad coalition come together: business, labor, high-tech, and others, coming together to pass legislation. We should grant this legislation final approval.

The Senate and the House have now both considered it. A host of associations, interested parties from the private sector have endorsed passing the bill without further amendment. At a time when we can do something to create jobs and not cost the taxpayers money, every day we wait, every day we delay is another day before those jobs are created. Every day we wait, every day we delay is another day that we hold back the innovative genius of America. Every day we wait, every day we delay is another day we are unable to compete with the rest of the world on a level playing field.

Any amendment—any amendment, including ones I might like—would force reconsideration by the House, and more unnecessary delay, and longer before we can create those jobs, longer before we can innovate, longer before we can compete with the rest of the world. I can think of a half dozen amendments that I would like to have in the bill.

I will vote against them because it is time to get this done. Patent reform legislation has been debated exhaustively in both the Senate and the House for the past four Congresses. It is the product of dozens of hearings and weeks of committee markups. We should proceed to the bill and pass it.

Let's not have any one person feeling they have the magic point everybody else has somehow overlooked. That is not the way the legislative process works. There are 100 here in the Senate and 435 in the House. Nobody gets every single thing they want. But here, the vast majority of Republicans and Democrats in the House and the Senate are getting what they feel is best for America.

It is time for the Senate to serve the interests of the American people by passing the legislation before us. We have before us a consensus bill that will facilitate invention, innovation, and job creation today. This can help everybody from startups and small businesses to our largest cutting-edge corporations.

Let's put Americans back to work. Let's show the American people that the Congress can actually accomplish something and do it for America. Here is something on which both Republicans and Democrats can come together. Let's not delay any longer. We have taken 6 years to get here. We had a vote yesterday where over 90 Senators voted to proceed, which indicates it is time to get moving, it is time to stop debating, and it is time to vote.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, it is quiet in here. Tomorrow night, down at the other end of the Capitol, hopefully it won't be this quiet. The President is going to give a speech that is to be focused on the next steps of getting our economy moving and getting people back to work. That is something which is on all of our minds.

As a guy who used to make my living as Governor of my State, I focused a lot on the economy. These are issues of great interest to me and certainly to the people I represent. The thought that occurs to me as we anticipate the President's speech is that I don't know that there is any one particular jobs bill that will do the trick. I would like to think there is a silver bullet, but I don't know that there is.

I have always focused on and what we try to focus on in our State is how to create a nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation. How do we do that? We try to make sure we invest wisely in infrastructure—roads, highways, bridges, ports, trains, water, sewer, broadband. We try to invest in the workforce and make sure we have people who are coming out of our schools who can read, write, do math, and who have the skills that will enable them to fill the kinds of jobs that will exist in the 21st century. The other part of what we focus on is trying to help promote research and development, and not just any kind but R&D that can be used to create products that can be commercialized and sold not only in this country but in other places as well.

Hopefully, the President will talk about some of those things tomorrow night. I look forward to whatever he talks about. I hope he talks about that kind of nurturing environment and what we can do to allow them to plow the fields so that companies, large and small, can actually grow some jobs here.

Part of the nurturing environment for job creation is infrastructure. We have been trying for many months

since the beginning of this year to work on the airport infrastructure in our country, to try to bring the FAA and air traffic control system into the 21st century because it is not and it needs to be. We need resources to modernize our airports across the country, and it is important that we actually pay for it and not add to the deficit.

Legislation was passed earlier this year that does that—modernizes the FAA and brings the air traffic control system into the 21st century, provides some agreement between the airlines and the general aviation community on how to come up with the resources we need to modernize our airports. It is a good approach, but it has been hung up in the House since then. We need to get that done.

Today and this week, another part of that infrastructure needs to be worked on. This is the infrastructure that allows companies that have a good idea—and inventors—to get a patent on their idea and the patent doesn't end up being litigated on and on, maybe for years, in the courts. Too often, it takes years when somebody comes up with a good idea. They submit it to the Patent Office, and it takes a long time to get to the top of the list and for somebody to pay attention to the application. Somebody may come in and say: I had the same idea before he did, and then it ends up in litigation. We need to stop that. We worked out a compromise that provides that whoever files first is essentially the winner. It is not necessarily the one who came up with the idea sooner. We need to get that legislation done and deal with that one aspect of uncertainty and unpredictability that businesses face. It would be great if we could make progress on that front this week.

Another part of the infrastructure for job creation and preservation is the Postal Service. Not a lot of people pay much attention to the Postal Service until they get into trouble. The Postal Service is in trouble. I describe the situation as dire, but it is not hopeless. The Postal Service finds itself in a situation not unlike that of the auto industry a couple of years ago. The auto industry was losing market share, and their products weren't especially good. They were losing market share, and they essentially concluded that we have more people than we need for the size of the market to which we now sell. We need to reduce our head count. They said: We have to make our wage-benefit structure more competitive for the people we are hiring in the future in order to be competitive. Third, they said: We have too many plants, and the wage-benefit structure was out of whack.

In the Postal Service today, we are seeing an enormous diversion of people using traditional mail, first-class mail, and a diversion into electronic media. As a naval flight officer in the Vietnam war, I remember how excited I was—and we have been joined by Senator MCCAIN, who went for a long time

without getting much mail at all when he was a POW. Those of us who were more fortunate, while deployed it was exciting to get mail—postcards, letters, cards, packages, magazines, newspapers. It was some connection from home.

Senator KLOBUCHAR has been over to Afghanistan, as have Senator McCAIN and I. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines Skype. They communicate through different social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Internet, and cell phones. We never had that stuff, even 30, 35 years ago, in Southeast Asia or around the world. But people don't use the mail too much, especially first-class mail.

The situation the Postal Service is in today—and they lost last year—is they are on track to lose about \$10 billion. They can only borrow \$15 billion on a line of credit with the Federal Government. That is it. They are looking to lose more money. If we don't let them do something, they are going to lose more next year. At the end of this year—they can default by the end of the month if we do nothing. If they don't do something, by the end of next September, they could be out of business. That is not good for them, for us, or for the 7 or 8 million jobs that depend on the Postal Service.

The situation with the Postal Service is similar to that of the auto industry a couple of years ago, but it is different too. The U.S. auto industry—not Ford but Chrysler and GM—was looking for, if you will, a taxpayer bailout. They got that and have repaid most of that to the Treasury.

The Postal Service is not asking for a bailout. They want to be allowed to be treated like a real business, run like a real business. They say, like the auto industry, we have too many people—more than they need. They need to continue to reduce the headcount through attrition and to incentivize the 120,000-or-so people who are eligible to retire, to retire by giving them early payments—maybe \$10,000 or \$20,000—and allowing them to maybe get credit for a couple extra years, but get the people who are eligible to retire and encourage them to do so, incentivize them to retire—not to be fired or laid off but to retire. So there are too many people.

Two, there are too many post offices. There are 33,000 post offices around the country. The post office doesn't want to close them all. They are saying: Let's look at 3,000 of them, and let's have a conversation with the communities there. Do all of these 3,000 post offices in those communities need to stay open? Are there some that could locate services elsewhere? Say, if you go to a convenience store that is open 24/7 or a pharmacy that is open maybe 7 days a week or if you go into a supermarket that is open 7 days a week, you can get your postal services there. They could locate those post offices there, and all those services in one place adds more convenience to con-

sumers. That is what the Postal Service wants to do.

The last thing the Postal Service has too much of is mail processing centers. They have over 500 of them around the country, which is probably twice the number they need. They need to be able to reduce those.

The Postal Service needs to be treated fairly, and they have been paying into the Civil Service Retirement System for many years for some of the older employees and more recently the Federal Employees Retirement System for the newer employees. Two separate audits done by the Segal Company and by a consulting company called the Hay Group have concluded that the Postal Service has overpaid its obligation into the Civil Service Retirement System by \$50 billion or more. They have estimated they have overpaid their obligation to the Federal Employees Retirement System by about \$7 billion more. The Postal Service has asked to be reimbursed for those overpayments. They would like to use those overpayments, on the one hand, to help meet their obligation to pay the heavy health care cost for folks who are retiring from the Postal Service or about to retire. They want to prefund that. It is an obligation they have under the 2006 law, and they would like to use some of the \$7 billion overpayment into the Federal Employees Retirement System to actually incent people who are eligible to retire from the Postal Service to go ahead and retire.

Eighty percent of the cost of the Postal Service is people—80 percent. The Postal Service has reduced its head count from about 800,000 people to, say, 600,000 people over the last 7 or 8 years. They need to be able to continue to reduce that in the years to come—roughly 100,000 over the next 2 or 3 years through attrition and maybe another 120,000 by incentivizing people to retire.

The Senator from Minnesota is still standing here waiting for me to stop, and I have a lot more I wish to say, but I am going to stop and come back maybe later today to finish my comments, but let me conclude with this.

We need to act so the Postal Service can save itself. We don't need to bail them out. We need to let them act as a real company. The situation is dire, but it is not hopeless. They need to be able to address, as the auto industry did, too many people. They need to be able to close and consolidate some post offices and colocate those services in places that make more sense and are more convenient to consumers, they need to be able to close some of their mail processing centers, and they need to be treated fairly with respect to their overpayments into both the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees Retirement System. We can do this, and we don't need to do it next year; we need to do it this year.

I yield the floor to our friend from Minnesota.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

AMERICA INVENTS ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I thank very much the Senator from Delaware, and I appreciate the ability to go ahead. I know the Senator from Arizona is waiting as well.

I rise to speak in support of the America Invents Act, a bill to revamp our patent system. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I worked on this bill. I was one of the cosponsors, and I also helped manage the bill the last time it was on the floor. I am here to make sure we get it over the finish line.

It is without dispute that intellectual property is one of our Nation's most valuable assets, and our patent system plays a vital role in maintaining the value of our intellectual property. In fact, the Commerce Department estimates that up to 75 percent of economic growth in our Nation since World War II is due to technological innovation—innovation that was made possible, in part, by our patent system.

I see firsthand the importance of success of a robust patent system whenever I am visiting Minnesota companies and talking with business leaders in our State, as I did many times over the past month. Minnesotans have brought the world everything from the pacemaker to the Post-It-Note. These innovations would not have been possible without the protection of the patent system. This strong commitment to innovation and development is why our State ranks sixth in the Nation in patents per capita, and we are No. 1 per capita for Fortune 500 companies.

Companies such as 3M, Ecolab, and Medtronic need an efficient patent system. But it is also medium-sized companies, such as Imation in Oakdale and Polaris in Medina, that rely on patents to grow their companies and create jobs in America. In fact, from 1980 to 2001, all the net job growth in our country came from companies that were less than 5 years old. It is the person in the garage building a mousetrap or, in the case of Medtronic, the first battery-powered pacemaker who drives our economy forward and creates the products Americans can make and sell to the world.

I truly believe, to get out of this economic rut, we need to be a country that makes stuff again, that invents, that exports to the world. That is why it is so critical we pass the America Invents Act.

Unfortunately, our patent laws haven't had a major update since 1952. The system is outdated, and it is quickly becoming a burden on our innovators and entrepreneurs. Because of these outdated laws, the Patent and Trademark Office faces a backlog of over 700,000 patent applications. Many would argue that all too often the office issues low-quality patents. One of these 700,000 patents may be the next