



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
***JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE***

CHAIRMAN JIM SAXTON

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**NEW GAO STUDY ON INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY AND PATENTS RELEASED**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – A new analysis of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office by the General Accounting Office (GAO) was released today by Joint Economic Committee (JEC) Chairman Jim Saxton and Congressman Lamar Smith. The GAO study, *Intellectual Property: Information on the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's Past and Future Operations*, documents the growing backlog of patent applications in recent years and reviews some of the options proposed to improve the situation.

“Given the importance of technological innovation to the future growth of our economy, timely approval of patents is vital,” Saxton said. “I am hopeful that recent reforms in the operation of the U.S. Patent Office will reduce patent pendency to much lower levels. I would also like to thank Congressman Smith for his interest in this issue and in requesting this GAO report, and the GAO for producing the report.”

Congressman Smith said: "American inventiveness and technological innovation are the pillars on which future economic growth are built. They rely on a well-organized U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

"This GAO report details the increased number of filings, unprocessed applications and patent pendency (the time from a patent application filing to the date that a patent is granted or the application abandoned) that has occurred during the past decade and the projected growth in the future. The report highlights why the USPTO should select one reform plan so that it can fulfill its role of protecting intellectual property.

"The study also provides answers on the topics of diversion of funds, training and retention. But it doesn't provide an answer to a critical question: What level of funding is needed over the next five years to reduce overall pendency to 18 months and 20 months? And it did not address the overriding question of the impact of pendency on the economy. I look forward to GAO's final report next year, when more information on the patent office reform becomes available.

"It is critically important that the USPTO become more efficient, accurate and productive in its duties so that innovators aren't stifled by delay nor encumbered by red tape. When the process fails, American intellectual property and our economy suffer.”

For a copy of the GAO report, please visit the JEC website at [www.house.gov/jec](http://www.house.gov/jec).

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