

## PTO unveils new patent filing system

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A new electronic patent application filing system to be used by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office was launched Thursday by Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez. Known as EFS-Web, the new system allows patent filers anywhere at any time to submit applications and pay fees online.

The USPTO is an agency of the Department of Commerce that reviews applications within the realm of patents, trademarks and copyrights.

Gutierrez said that the EFS-Web was in line with President Bush's efforts in advancing America's competitive edge in innovation and technology.

"This new electronic filing system is another critical step in our on-going efforts to provide innovators with the most secure and simple patent-applicant process in the world," Gutierrez said. "Our country is rich in skill and creativity. Every day this human talent develops novel and useful inventions to improve the lives and livelihoods of the American people."

PTO Director and Undersecretary for Intellectual Property Jon Dudas and Commissioner for Patents John Doll were also at hand for the system's unveiling at the Department of Commerce.

"This is something everyone in the patent world supports," said Dudas, calling the new filing system more efficient, more flexible, faster and easier to use.

According to Dudas, the system demonstrates three important principles in the application process.

It would allow filers to file and pay online, provide them with automatic and rapid access to filed applications, and is a more secure and accurate process.

"The USPTO worked with the intellectual property community to develop this new system," Dudas said. "Focus groups composed of corporations, law firms, and individual filers provided input about their needs. Based on this customer input, USPTO developed a tool designed to meet those needs -- and efficient patent submission tool in which users have full confidence."

The new system has been undergoing effort with beta tests occurring over the last several months. As many as 80 organizations participated in the pilot program and some 200 attended EFS-Web onsite and Web-based trainings, according to the PTO.

Members from three innovative entities in the industry were also at the unveiling and filed the first applications using EFS-WEB.

3M Company, the law firm of Fish & Richardson and the University of Maryland, all early adopters, filed at the launching.

The PTO believes this will be a more accurate and efficient filing system from the traditional paper-based system, reducing the application process by 30 minutes.

EFS-Web submissions processed through the USPTO would allow filers to receive access to their applications by using the Patent Application Information Retrieval system. In addition, they receive an automatic electronic receipt.

Filers are also able to file applications and additional materials using existing software, attach PDF files easily, as well as pay filing fees online. The new system will show filers documents prepared and reviewed by patent attorneys.

Although Dudas says the system is voluntary, which sets America apart from other nations that have mandatory systems in place, they expect 100-percent crossover to filing online using the new system within the next few years.

"The U.S. patent filing system is the basis for the future," he said.

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