

Chapter 1000 Petitions: Matters Submitted to Commissioner and Supervisory Examiner

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1001 Statutory Authority of Commissioner

35 U. S. C. 6. Duties of commissioner. The Commissioner, under the direction of the Secretary of Commerce, shall superintend or perform all duties required by law respecting the granting and issuing of patents and the registration of trade-marks; and he shall have charge of property belonging to the Patent Office. He may, subject to the approval of the Secretary of Commerce, establish regulations, not inconsistent with law, for the conduct of proceedings in the Patent Office.

The statute quoted above states the authority of the Commissioner of Patents to review and supervise all aspects of the Examiner's work in the Office.

1001.01 Modes of Exercising Authority

The Commissioner's authority to review and supervise the work of the Office is exercised by the promulgation of the Rules of Practice; issuance of Orders, Notices and Memoranda stating Office policies and modes for effectuating these policies; decisions on petitions by applicants, and by the designation of particular cases which must be submitted to the Commissioner or other officials authorized by the Commissioner. The present chapter deals with the latter two items.

The Commissioner's authority relating to decisions on petitions and to the supervision of the work of the examining corps has, in instances not requiring the personal decision of the Commissioner, been delegated to the Executive Examiner, to the Supervisory Examiners, to the Solicitor and to Law Examiners.

1002 Petitions

Rule 181. Petition to the Commissioner. (a) Petition may be taken to the Commissioner (1) from any action or requirement of any examiner in the ex parte prosecution of an application which is not subject to appeal to the Board of Appeals or to the court; (2) in cases in which a statute or the rules specify that the matter is to be determined directly by or reviewed by the Commissioner; and (3) to invoke the supervisory authority of the Commissioner in appropriate circumstances.

(b) Any such petition must contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed and the action requested. Briefs or memoranda, if any, in support thereof should accompany or be embodied in the petition; and where facts are to be proven, the proof in the form of affidavits (and exhibits, if any) must accompany the petition.

(c) When a petition is taken from an action or requirement of an examiner in the ex parte prosecution of an application, it may be required that there have been a proper request for reconsideration (rule 111) and a repeated action by the examiner. The examiner may be directed by the Commissioner to furnish a written statement, within a specified time, setting forth the reasons for his decision upon the matters averred in the petition, supplying a copy thereof to the petitioner.

(d) No fee is required for a petition to the Commissioner except in the case of a petition to revive an abandoned application (rule 137) or for the delayed payment of a final fee (rule 317).

(e) Oral hearings will not be granted except when considered necessary by the Commissioner.

(f) The mere filing of a petition will not stay the period for replying to an examiner's action which may be running against an application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings.

(g) Determination of petitions of various kinds may be delegated by the Commissioner to the Supervisory Examiners or to the Solicitor and Law Examiners.

Rule 183. Suspension of rules. In an extraordinary situation, when justice requires, any requirement of these rules which is not a requirement of the statutes

may be suspended or waived by the Commissioner in person on petition of the interested party, subject to such other requirements as may be imposed.

A petition may be taken to the Commissioner on any matter which the petitioner believes warrants his consideration. However, petitions on appealable matters ordinarily are not entertained.

The determination of petitions is, in the vast majority of cases, delegated by the Commissioner to the Supervisory Examiners or to the Solicitor and Law Examiners.

The mere filing of a petition will not stay the period for replying to an Examiner's action which may be running against an application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings (Rule 181 (f)). For example, if a petition to vacate a final rejection as premature is filed near the end of the statutory period, the statutory period for response to the final rejection is not extended even if the petition is not reached for decision within that period. However, if the petition is granted and the applicant has filed an otherwise full response to the rejection *within the statutory period*, the case is not abandoned.

1002.01 Procedure

Petitions, together with the respective application files, are sent by the Docket Branch to the Office of the Commissioner or other official having the delegated authority to decide the petition. The petition may be referred to the Examiner for a formal statement under Rule 181 (c) or for an informal memorandum.

Where a formal statement under Rule 181 (c) is made, a copy thereof is mailed to the petitioner by the Examiner unless the latter is otherwise directed, and the file and petition, accompanied by the original copy of his statement, are returned to the official handling the petition. If the informal memorandum is requested, no copy thereof is mailed to the petitioner by the Examiner. After the decision has been rendered, the file with the petition and decision is sent to the Docket Branch, where the decision is entered on the "Contents" of the file wrapper which is then returned to the Primary Examiner, who will act in accordance with the decision.

1002.02 Petitionable Subjects

The following is a list of the most common petitions, together with a reference to the sections of this Manual where they are more fully treated:

A. REFERRED TO SUPERVISORY EXAMINERS

1. From any *ex parte* action or requirement by the Examiner which is not subject to appeal as, for example,

(a) Prematureness of final rejection. See 706.07 (c).

(b) Refusal to enter an amendment. See Rule 127.

(c) Holding of abandonment. See 711.03 (c) and 711.03 (d).

2. To make an application special on the ground of applicant's age or state of health or to make special a division, continuation or continuation-in-part of an earlier application. See 708.02.

3. To amend after decision by Board of Appeals. See Rule 198, 1214.07.

4. From a final decision of the Examiner requiring restriction of an application. See Rule 144, 818.03 (c).

B. REFERRED TO SOLICITOR AND LAW EXAMINERS

5. To make an application special on the ground of prospective manufacture or infringement or where applicant, for lack of a patent or an Office action indicating patentable subject matter, is unable to interest capital. See 708.02.

6. To revive an abandoned application. See 711.03 (c) and 711.03 (d).

7. For access to an application. See 103 and 104.

8. For certificate of correction. See 1402 to 1402.02.

9. For filing date. See 409.03 and 506.

10. To accept late final fee. See 712.

11. To convert to or from fee-exempt status. See 607.01, 607.01 (b), and 607.01 (c).

1003 Matters Submitted to Commissioner Through Supervisory Examiners

The following matters require the approval of the Commissioner. For this purpose, they should be transmitted by the Examiner to the Supervisory Examiner.

1. Where a patent claim is copied outside the time limit set, its entry requires the approval of the Commissioner. See 1101.02 (f).

2. Amendment copying patent claims without identifying patent. Rule 205, 1101.02 (d).

3. Return of papers containing discourteous remarks. See 714.25.

4. Return of papers other than priority papers entered on Contents of File Wrapper. See 717.01 and 1004.

5. Requests by Primary Examiners for authorization to reopen prosecution of an application after a Court decision. Rule 198, 1214.07.

1004 Matters Submitted to Director, Patent Examining Operation, Through Supervisory Examiners

The following is a list of matters which require the approval of the Director. For this purpose, they should be transmitted by the Examiner to the Supervisory Examiner.

1. Request for withdrawal of an allowed application from issue. See 1308 to 1308.03.

2. Requests by Primary Examiners for authorization to reopen prosecution of an application after decision by the Board of Appeals. Rule 198. See 1214.07.

3. Return of certain priority papers. See 201.14 (c).

1005 Matters Submitted to Supervisory Examiners

In addition to the submission of the proposed actions listed in 1003 and 1004, all unusual questions of practice may be referred to the Supervisory Examiners. In the following specific cases, the proposed action must be submitted to the Supervisory Examiners for review:

1. Fourth or subsequent complete actions on the merits which do not close the prosecution.

2. Actions subsequent to the closing of the prosecution before the Examiner which would reopen or afford grounds for reopening the prosecution. See 706.07 (e) and 1208.01.

3. Actions in which a shortened statutory period is set. See 710.02 to 710.02 (b).

4. Actions on amendments after allowance (Rule 312) except the correction of mere formal matters under Order No. 3311. See 714.16 to 714.16 (e), 1101.02 (g).

5. Actions which hold unpatentable claims copied from a patent for interference purposes

where the grounds relied upon are equally applicable to the patentee. See 1101.02 (f).

6. Public Law 619 and Public Law 690 cases in which the priority request is granted or previously allowed priority benefits are withdrawn. See 201.16.

7. Second or subsequent extensions of a set shortened statutory period under Rule 136 (b). See 710.02 (e).

8. Second or subsequent suspensions of action under Rule 103. See 709.

9. Divisional reissue applications filed. See Rule 177.

10. Actions which state that a new application obviously fails to disclose an invention with the clarity required by 35 U. S. C. 112. See 702.01.

11. Letters to an applicant of an allowed application informing him of a proposal of requesting withdrawal of said application from issue for the purpose of rejecting a claim or claims as fully met by, or obviously unpatentable over, a new reference. See 1308.01.

12. Amendments presented after decision by the Board of Appeals as to which the Primary Examiner recommends entry as placing the application in condition for allowance. See 1214.07.

13. Letters to an applicant suggesting claims for purposes of interference, the adoption of which by the applicant would result in the withdrawal of an application from issue. See 1101.01 (o).

14. Second or subsequent attempts at conversion of an application (addition or removal of an inventor under Rule 45), or simultaneous addition and removal of inventors. See 201.03.

15. Letters requesting jurisdiction of applications involved in interference, see 1101.01 (o).

16. Petitions under Rule 212 for concurrent ex parte and inter partes prosecution. See 1103.