

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 24, 2025

Coke Morgan Stewart
Acting Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Acting Director Stewart,

On Friday, June 6th, 2025, the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) announced that it no longer plans to launch the Southeast Regional Outreach Office (SEROO) in Atlanta, Georgia, and will instead open it at the USPTO's Alexandria, Virginia headquarters. We find this decision highly concerning, and we write to request additional information regarding the decision-making process that resulted in this mistake.

After the success of the four regional offices created in the America Invents Act of 2011, Congress sought to add offices around the country to improve Americans' access to USPTO services.¹ Republicans and Democrats worked together to pass the Unleashing American Innovators Act (UAIA), which President Biden signed into law on December 29, 2022.² The legislation required the USPTO establish a Southeast Regional Office within three years of enactment as well as a community outreach office in the northern New England region within five years of enactment, among other provisions designed to bolster USPTO outreach to small and medium-sized businesses across the country.

Atlanta, Georgia was chosen as the SEROO location after a lengthy process designed to meet the requirements stipulated under the UAIA, namely considering the proposed sites' 1) number of patent-intensive industries, 2) number of research-intensive institutions, and 3) number of existing government, legal, and business frameworks that support intellectual property-intensive industries.³ As part of this process, the USPTO issued a request for comments seeking public input on potential regional office locations and received more than 200 comments from the general public, USPTO employees, city and state officials and the business community.

According to the USPTO's press release announcing the Atlanta office, the city's "growing and diverse economy," coupled with the resources available to its large number of startups and innovators "made it a top location for the Southeast Regional Office."⁴ Atlanta, according to the USPTO, "has an active and highly ranked research development community with five Tier 1 research universities, one of the top-tier Veterans Administration research hospitals in the nation, and the Center for Disease Control."⁵

While Alexandria, Virginia is in the southeast region of the country, Americans living there are already served by the USPTO headquarters. Regional patent offices allow the USPTO to reach Americans where they live and work. This is not disputed. In fact, the USPTO has an established history of supporting regional offices. In its 2024 report the USPTO wrote, "With the establishment of the regional offices, the USPTO has been able to

¹ According to the USPTO's website, "Establishing these offices moved the agency toward a new outreach model that meets Americans where they are and has yielded great economic and social benefits to both the USPTO and the communities that these offices serve."

² Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-328 (2022).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Press Release. *Atlanta; New Hampshire county selected for new USPTO outreach office locations*, USPTO (Dec. 13, 2023), <https://www.uspto.gov/about-us/news-updates/atlanta-new-hampshire-county-selected-new-uspto-outreach-office-locations>

⁵ *Id.*

reach a more diverse set of stakeholders at a more local scale.”⁶ Regional offices, the USPTO continued, allow it to customize in-person educational programming, “including seminars or workshops that educate customers about the patent application process or how to employ IP strategies for entrepreneurs.”⁷

The USPTO has also acknowledged that regional offices are good for the health of our patent ecosystem. Opening regional offices, it wrote in 2024, “has had a positive impact on employee recruitment, and has led to the onboarding of over 400 patent examiners” since 2012.⁸ Regional offices created unique detail opportunities that “create benefits for the employee, the agency, and the public.”⁹

Atlanta was chosen after an intensive process that invited public input. In contrast, the USPTO’s decision to ignore stakeholders and open the SEROO in Alexandria instead was made with no public explanation whatsoever. We therefore request that the USPTO respond to the following questions by July 9, 2025.

1. Did the USPTO consider the required factors under the UAIA for the establishment of an SEROO? If yes, please describe the process in detail.
2. What was the involvement of non-USPTO personnel in the decision to open the SEROO at the USPTO headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia?
3. How does the USPTO plan to engage with the southeast region from Alexandria, Virginia? Please describe the in-person programming planned particularized to the southeast region.
4. Does the USPTO plan to allow for the public to comment on the decision not to open the regional office in Atlanta, as decided in 2023?


⁶ Report to Congress. Unleashing American Innovators Act of 2022: Additional Regional Offices Study, USPTO (Dec. 2024), <https://www.uspto.gov/sites/default/files/documents/UAIA-Offices-Report.pdf>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*


Sincerely,



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Ranking Member, Subcommittee
on Courts, Intellectual Property,
Artificial Intelligence, and the
Internet
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives



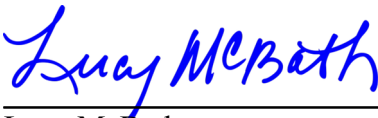
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