

Statement of John Wilke
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on
“Telework: Breaking New Ground”
Before the
Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service,
and the District of Columbia
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
November 6, 2007

Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Marchant, Honorable Committee Members, and Distinguished Guests. My name is John Wilke. I am a Trademark Attorney Examiner at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). It is my honor and privilege to testify before this Committee this morning.

I have been asked to testify because I am participating in a USPTO pilot program which allows USPTO employees to work from geographically remote locations. In my case, I am working from my home in Long Grove, Illinois, just north of Chicago and I am testifying remotely from that location today.

I first worked as a Trademark Examiner at the USPTO from 1979 to 1981. It was my first attorney position, and I learned a great deal in those first few years at the Office. After leaving the USPTO, I worked as a trademark attorney in private industry for the next 23 years. I eventually became Trademark Counsel for Monsanto Company, and

then Patent and Trademark Counsel for American Tool Companies. During that time I was elected to the Board of Directors of the International Trademark Association (INTA), and served as chairman of several INTA committees.

Following the takeover of my company in 2004, I considered several trademark positions in law firms and companies. When the USPTO offered me a position, I happily returned to the USPTO and worked at headquarters for two years. When the opportunity arose to telework, I requested to work remotely from Chicago. The Office was able to accommodate my request earlier this year as part of a geographic pilot program, and I have been working remotely from my Chicago home since then.

The Office's telework program has truly been a blessing to me. It has allowed me to remain close to my family and friends and has allowed me to participate fully in the life of our community.

For almost twenty years my family and I have lived in the Chicago area. My wife and I raised our three children in Buffalo Grove, and they all graduated from Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire. Our son Sean graduated from Columbia College in Chicago, and Matthew graduated from DePaul, and both now live and work in Chicago. My wife works at Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge. We are active members of St. Mary Parish in Buffalo Grove. I am a member of the parish choir and my wife is a Eucharistic minister. We have many friends here. The telework program has made it possible for me

to work for the USPTO while at the same time enjoying the blessing of living near my children and among our long time friends. It has truly enhanced my quality of life.

I believe the Office's telework program has also greatly benefited the USPTO. Through this program I was able to return to the Office and make a valuable contribution to the Trademark Examining Operation. Soon after I returned, I was given the responsibility of assisting in the training of new examining attorneys, and I have served as a mentor for six young attorneys so far. I have maintained the highest production and quality levels and have achieved a rating of Outstanding for every rating period since my return. Last month, I was recognized by the American Intellectual Property Law Association with an award for outstanding performance as an examining attorney.

I feel the USPTO has the best telework program I know of in government or private industry. It has truly enhanced my quality of life, and has benefited the agency as well, by allowing it to attract and retain capable and experienced employees. I also believe other agencies and other federal employees would benefit through the adoption and implementation of similar programs.

Thank you.