

Chapter 1000 Matters Submitted to Commissioner, Directors and Group Managers

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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 trademarks; 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.

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 Superintendent, to the Directors, to the Group Managers, to the Solicitor and to the 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) Except as otherwise provided in these rules, any such petition not filed within 60 days from the action complained of, may be dismissed as untimely. The mere filing of a petition will not stay the period for reply 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.

Petitions on appealable matters ordinarily are not entertained.

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.

Rule 181(f) now provides that any petition under that rule which is not filed "within 60 days from the action complained of" may be dismissed as untimely. Often, the "action complained of", for example, a requirement for a new drawing, is included in the same letter as an action on the merits of the claims, the latter having a four months period for response. Under such circumstances, if applicant requests reconsideration, under Rule 111(b), of the requirement for a new drawing, the Examiner's action on this request, if adverse, establishes the beginning of the 60 day period for filing the petition. The petition must be filed within this period even though the statutory period for response to the rejection of the claims may extend beyond the 60 day period.

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 re-

turned 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:

1. 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.

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

3. For filing date. See 409.03 and 506.

4. To accept late final fee. See 712.

5. To convert from fee-exempt status. See 607.01 and 607.01(b).

6. Second or subsequent extensions of time for filing an appeal brief. See 1206.

A. Referred to Directors of Patent Examining Operations

7. 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).

8. 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.

9. To amend after decision by Board of Appeals. See Rule 198 and 1214.07.

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

B. Referred to Solicitor and Law Examiners

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

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

1003 Matters Submitted to Commissioner Through the Directors

The following matters require the approval of the Commissioner. For this purpose, they

should be transmitted by the Examiner to the appropriate Director.

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 for authorization to reopen prosecution of an application after a Court decision. Rule 198, 1214.07.

1004 Matters Submitted to Directors of Patent Examining Operations

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

1. Request for withdrawal of an allowed application from issue. See 1308 to 1308.02.

2. Requests 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).

4. Request for return of original oath. See 604.04(a).

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. Divisional reissue applications filed. See Rule 177.

7. Interferences between applications neither of which is in condition for allowance. See 1101.01(c).

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Applications filed without drawings where there is a doubt as to the need for drawings. See 608.02.

11. Providing applicants with copies of references in excess of 30 pages. See 1005, No. 15.

1005 Matters Submitted to Group Managers

In addition to the submission of the proposed actions listed in this section, all unusual ques-

tions of practice may be referred to the Group Managers. In the following specific cases, the proposed action must be submitted to the Group Managers for review:

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

2. 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), and 1101.02(g).

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

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

5. Certain rejections on double patenting of divisional (or parent) case when restriction or election of species has previously been required. 804.04.

6. Letters to an applicant of an allowed application informing him of a proposal to request 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.

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

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

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

10. Interferences under 681 O.G. 864. See 1101.02 (Item C II).

11. Request for patentability report. See 705.01(e).

12. Petitions under special examining procedure for certain new applications-accelerated examination. See 708.02.

13. New ground of rejection or objection or new reference cited in Examiner's Answer on appeal. Prior approval of the Group Manager must be obtained before the Answer is written and the file copy of the Answer must be stamped "approved" by the Manager if it meets with his approval.

14. 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).

15. Providing applicants with copies of references comprising 15 to 30 pages. See 1004, No. 11.

16. Request for Interview after the application has been sent to issue. See 713.10.

The Group Manager should also be consulted in situations such as the one spelled out in 1208.01, where it must be decided whether to fully

reopen the ex parte prosecution after appeal or to proceed by introducing a new ground of rejection in the Examiner's Answer. Such consultation would ordinarily be confined to

questions of policy as to whether the best interests of the applicant as well as the office would be served by reopening the prosecution or extending the term to reply to the Answer.