

Thursday, June 23, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján spoke on the House floor today in support of an amendment he offered to H.R. 1249, legislation to reform the patent process. Luján’s amendment improves the selection process for U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) satellite offices, and was passed by the House with unanimous support. The amendment included language to consider the availability of scientific personnel in the region. New Mexico has one of the highest levels of scientific personnel per capita of any state.

Luján also proposed an amendment requiring the Patent Office provide patent application assistance to small businesses and independent inventors. The Republican majority refused to allow this amendment to come to the House floor for a vote.

Below are Luján’s remarks.

“I rise today in support of my amendment to HR 1249, the America Invents Act. The America Invents Act provides for the creation of United States Patent and Trademark Office satellite offices. For many small businesses and independent inventors navigating the patent application process can be challenging. Small businesses, entrepreneurs, and innovators are the foundation of our economy but do not always have the resources that larger corporations or institutions have to assist them in obtaining a patent. By improving access to the United States Patent and Trademark Office resources, satellite offices have the potential to help small businesses and independent inventors navigate the patent application process.

“However, this bill essentially provides no guidance to determine the location of such satellite offices. While the language in the bill contains stated purposes for satellite offices, it does not specify that these purposes be part of the selection process. This amendment makes it explicit that the purposes of the satellite offices, which are included in the underlying bill, such as increasing outreach activities to better connect patent filers and innovators with the USPTO, be part of the selection process. It also specifies that the economic impact to the region be

considered, as well as the availability of knowledgeable personnel, so that new patent examiners can be hired at minimal recruitment cost, saving taxpayers money.

“The selection of USPTO satellite offices should be done in a way that supports economic growth and puts inventors on a path to success. I think this is a common-sense amendment and I urge its adoption.”

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