

SENATE APPROVES CORNERSTONE OF KIRK'S "SMALL BUSINESS BILL OF RIGHTS"

(Source: <http://kirk.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=331585>)

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WASHINGTON—The Senate today approved a key element of U.S. Senator Mark Kirk's "Small Business Bill of Rights" agenda when it voted in favor of a bipartisan amendment the Illinois lawmaker authored to expedite assistance to small business owners during the federal patent approval process. The amendment passed as part of S. 23, The Patent Reform Act.

"This amendment seeks to assist some of our greatest innovators by providing a fast lane within the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for small businesses to receive information and assistance regarding their patent applications," Senator Kirk said. "Currently, American small businesses produce thirteen to fourteen times more patents per employee than do large firms, proving the axiom that small businesses are the true incubators of American innovation."

Senator Kirk collaborated with Senator Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) to offer the amendment after originally promoting the provision as part of the "Small Business Bill of Rights," legislation he introduced in Congress last year while serving in the House of Representatives.

The Senate approved inclusion of the amendment in a federal patent reform package currently making its way through Congress.

Senator Kirk said the measure would help business firms navigate U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) procedures by establishing a PTO Ombudsman Program to assist small businesses with patent filing issues.

"Small businesses are the economic engines of our economy," Senator Kirk said. "Small business breakthroughs led to the development of airplanes, FM radio and the personal computer."

“It is vital for America’s future competitiveness, economic growth and job creation that these innovators spend time developing new products and processes, not wading through government red tape.”

Small businesses employ 39% of high-tech workers such as scientists, engineers, and information technology workers generating the majority of innovations that come from U.S. companies. The state of Illinois is home to 258,000 small employers and more than 885,000 self-employers.