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Computer & Communications Industry Association

February 2, 2010

Sent via U.S. mail and Electronic mail:

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Last week, you addressed our nation and discussed the diverse and deep challenges we must attend to in the coming year. Ensuring the economic health of the nation must remain a top priority, and you made it clear that American innovation is key to our ability to compete globally. We wholeheartedly agree with the need to focus on competition and innovation. With that in mind, we respectfully urge you to lead the effort to reform our outdated patent laws, which is crucial to promoting the innovation we desperately need – especially in the high-tech sector.

The high-tech sector is among the world's most innovative businesses that drive our nation's economic growth. Our patent system, which dates back to the founding of this country, is at the heart of U.S. innovation policy, but its operation has become counter productive in several ways and it needs serious attention. We encourage you to continue focusing on innovation policy in the coming year and make patent reform a priority within your innovation agenda.

The need for patent reform is clear. The last comprehensive revision of U.S. patent law took place in 1952 – light years away from where we are today on technology issues. The current patent system has come under increasing pressure as the technological revolution transforms our way of life and business. It is past time for the patent system to catch up with the 21st Century high-tech economy. As you wrote during your campaign, “Intellectual property is to the digital age what physical goods were to the industrial age.”

Your campaign also asserted, “A system that produces timely, high-quality patents is essential for global competitiveness in the 21st century. By improving predictability and clarity in our patent system, we will help foster an environment that encourages innovation.”

Fulfilling your goals to rebalance, strengthen and enhance the current patent system will enable cutting-edge innovation to continue to drive the U.S. knowledge-based economy. Fair and balanced patent reform will help spur economic growth, investment, job creation, technological progress and more innovation.

Today U.S. businesses must devote billions of dollars to patent disputes that would otherwise be invested in jobs, innovation and consumer savings. At the same time, consumer access to innovation is severely hampered by unnecessarily arcane and complex rules that force companies to hedge against the risks of innovation rather than optimize the benefits to consumers and society as a whole. The system we have

today can too easily be gamed by the narrow focused special parochial interests that you have so often called out as part of the problem. All too often, the patent system today operates as a disincentive to the sorts of creativity and innovation it is supposed to foster.

We respectfully urge you to make passage of comprehensive patent reform a top legislative priority in 2010. Your leadership on the issue will benefit all Americans—from small business owners to independent inventors to consumers of innovative, new products. As you said in your address, “We should start where most new jobs do: in small businesses, companies that begin when an entrepreneur takes a chance on a dream, or a worker decides its time she became her own boss.” These entrepreneurs are innovators – and the reason for reform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E J Black". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Edward J. Black
President & CEO
Computer & Communications Industry Association