

US Congress sends Obama major patent overhaul

September 9 2011



Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Senator Patrick Leahy, pictured in 2010. The US Senate Thursday passed legislation to drag the web of US patent laws into the Internet age and spur high-tech innovation, sending the measure to President Barack Obama to sign into law.

The US Senate Thursday passed legislation to drag the web of US patent laws into the Internet age and spur high-tech innovation, sending the measure to President Barack Obama to sign into law.

In a rare show of bipartisan unity of purpose, the Democratic-held chamber voted 89-9 margin to approve the measure, which cleared the Republican-led House of Representatives by a similarly lopsided 304-117 margin earlier this year.

"This is bipartisan, commonsense legislation that will spur the innovation

that drives the American economy," cheered Democratic [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) Chairman Patrick Leahy, a key author of the legislation.

"The America Invents Act will ensure that inventors large and small maintain the competitive edge that has put America at the pinnacle of global innovation," he said, amid deep worries about 9.1 percent unemployment.

Leahy's main partner in the House, Republican Judiciary Committee Lamar Smith, called the vote "a victory for America's innovators and job creators who rely on our patent system to develop new products and grow their businesses."

Smith said the measure was "the most significant change to US [patent law](#) in 175 years" and called it "one of the most significant jobs creation bills enacted by Congress this year."

The bill, which Obama was expected to sign quickly, shifts US patents from a "first to invent" to "first inventor to file" system while reducing a backlog in applications and curbing what its authors described as frivolous lawsuits.

A statement on the official website of Smith's committee warns that "this year, for the first time, China is expected to become the world's number one patent publisher, surpassing the US and Japan in the total and basic number of patents."

"Our outdated [patent system](#) has become a barrier to innovation," it says.

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Citation: US Congress sends Obama major patent overhaul (2011, September 9) retrieved 16

April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-09-congress-obama-major-patent-overhaul.html>

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