Breaking the Matrix: Federal Judge and Inventors Confront the Patent System That Failed Them

In his first conference talk since leaving the bench, Judge Alan Albright joins inventors in D.C. who say the USPTO and policymakers broke their businesses.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When inventors received patents from the U.S. government, they believed they could rely on those rights. But since Congress enacted the America Invents Act in 2011, creating new administrative proceedings at the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB), many inventors found themselves fighting to keep patents alive in administrative tribunals rather than defending them in court. The patent system shifted. Inventors' voices did not. Now, that's changing.

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>
> *Molly Metz*

On September 30–October 1, inventors, entrepreneurs, patent owners, attorneys, investors, and innovation leaders will gather in Washington, D.C., for the 4th Annual US Inventor Conference. They'll be joined by USPTO Director John A. Squires, former U.S. District Judge Alan D. Albright, Commissioner for Patents Barry Schindler, Coke Morgan Stewart (former Acting Director and Deputy Director of the USPTO), patent strategy expert Erich Spangenberg, and more.

The conference brings together a unique cross-section of people who have experienced the patent system from different perspectives, including USPTO leadership, a former federal judge, national IP policy leaders, inventors, patent owners, litigators, entrepreneurs, and artificial-intelligence innovators.

The program begins September 30 with a US Inventor tradition: upwards of 100 inventors walking the halls of Congress together, bringing their experiences with America's patent system directly to lawmakers. On October 1, the conversation moves to the USPTO Madison Building, where Squires opens the day with The State of American Invention.

A centerpiece is the appearance of former U.S. District Judge Alan D. Albright, who recently concluded eight years on the federal bench. According to Albright and conference organizers,

the US Inventor Conference marks his first conference speaking appearance since leaving the bench.

"Some of the most important conversations about our patent system need to include the people who actually depend on it: the inventors," said Albright. "After nearly eight years on the federal bench, I'm looking forward to joining US Inventor and having a candid conversation about what I saw, where our patent system is falling short, and what we need to get right for the next generation of American innovation."



US Inventor's 4th Annual Conference, "Are You Stuck in the Invention Matrix?," takes place September 30–October 1, 2026, bringing inventors and patent reform advocates to Washington to address challenges facing America's independent inventors.

Coke Morgan Stewart, President and CEO of C4IP and former Acting Director and Deputy Director of the USPTO, brings similar weight. Stewart spent nearly 12 years at the agency across four administrations. Her participation reflects an expanding dialogue between national IP policy organizations and independent inventors amidst ongoing patent reform debates.

The conference will tackle key debates surrounding the U.S. patent system and recent changes in USPTO policy. In "Breaking the Matrix: When the Data Challenges the Narrative," Stewart joins Albright, patent litigator Mark Siegmund, and inventor Steve Shattil to examine what has actually happened as the USPTO has changed its approach to PTAB institution—considering parallel litigation, prior adjudications, settled expectations, economic interests, and other circumstances. The panel asks a fundamental question: what does the evidence now show? And if policies that reduce duplicative proceedings and preserve access to the courts are producing results without the predicted harms, should those protections become durable law rather than remain dependent on USPTO policy?

Artificial intelligence will be another major focus. A conversation led by Commissioner for Patents Barry Schindler and Erich Spangenberg will explore how AI is entering patent examination inside the USPTO and what that means for inventors. A second session explores how AI is changing invention, patent prosecution, inventorship, valuation, monetization, and enforcement.

For Conference Director and US Inventor advocate Molly Metz, the issues are deeply personal. Metz, a five-time world jump rope champion, turned her experience into patented jump-rope technology and built an American business around her inventions. Her company grew to approximately 40 employees, manufactured products, licensed its technology, and created a market around patents issued by the U.S. government. But after spending years building the company, her patents were challenged at the PTAB and ultimately cancelled. The battle devastated her business and became the catalyst for her work advocating for independent inventors.

"I learned the hard way that receiving a patent and being able to rely on it can be two very different things," Metz said. "This conference is about bringing the people who shape the patent system into the same room with the inventors who actually live with the consequences."

The theme of this year's conference, "Are You Stuck in the Invention Matrix?" was developed by US Inventor President Randy Landreneau. The theme challenges inventors to compare how the patent system is supposed to work with their actual experiences.

"We chose the Matrix because inventors have been told a story about how the patent system is supposed to work, while many have lived a very different reality," said Landreneau. "This conference is about looking at the evidence, listening to inventors, and asking whether the current system is actually producing the innovation America needs. The unrestricted growth of potential monopolies, increasing Chinese technological threat, and difficulty reshoring manufacturing indicate that change is needed. Inventors and others from across America are coming to Washington because they believe that conversation matters."

4th Annual US Inventor Conference
September 30–October 1, 2026
Washington, D.C. | USPTO Madison Building
Conference Information & Registration: https://usinventor.org/usi-fourth-annual-conference/

About US Inventor
US Inventor is an inventor-led non-profit organization dedicated to educating, supporting and advocating for independent inventors and patent owners and to advancing a U.S. patent system in which American inventors and patent-based startups can meaningfully protect their inventions and enforce their rights.

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