

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

October 31, 2025

John A. Squires  
Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Director Squires,

On Wednesday, October 1, 2025, the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) announced the closure of the Rocky Mountain Regional Office, located in Denver, Colorado. I find this decision highly concerning, and I write to request additional information regarding the decision-making process.

After the America Invents Act of 2011 was signed into law, four regional offices were established around the country to improve Americans' access to USPTO services, one of which being the Rocky Mountain Regional Office. Regional offices work to increase outreach and connect patent filers and innovators far from USPTO headquarters in Washington, DC. They also serve to enhance examiner retention, improve examiner recruitment, and thus improve examination quality and decrease the backlog of unexamined patent applications. The Rocky Mountain Regional Office serves a nine-state region including Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Utah.

USPTO's Rocky Mountain Regional Office brought important services and resources to a region rich with innovative minds, and its closure will create a hole in the inventor ecosystem for the nine states it supported. As you know, Colorado boasts a highly educated workforce and a culture that fosters collaboration between the public and private sectors to drive innovation in clean energy, health and biosciences, quantum computing, and research and development with our federally funded research labs. Our state's innovation hubs and corridors stretch not only from the Elevate Quantum Colorado in the Denver-Aurora area and the U.S. 36 Corridor between Denver and Boulder, but also encompasses the Innovation Corridor of the Front Range with our national labs and Silicon Mountain in Colorado Springs. The closure of this office goes beyond just USPTO employees; it impacts the broader innovation ecosystem and people's access to personalized support in the Rocky Mountain Region.

As you are aware, USPTO's operations are financed by fees collected from its users and do not rely on federal appropriations to function. Under the current government shutdown, USPTO remains fully operational, as it was before October 1. It was shocking to learn about the decision to close the Rocky Mountain Regional Office on the first day of the new fiscal year, FY26, since one of the reasons cited was leased office space and overhead expenses costing nearly \$1 million for less than 10 in-person employees. The reality is the Rocky Mountain

Regional Office accounts for only .035 percent of USPTO's annual budget; a drop in the bucket compared to the critical services the office provides.

Unfortunately, reporting indicates USPTO is diminishing the prevalence of in-person work in the Rocky Mountain Regional Office. In the press release announcing the closure, USPTO states the number of employees physically reporting to the office was less than 10 as of December 2024. This figure originates from a report produced prior to any return-to-office orders issued by this administration. In fact, there were anywhere from 30 to 50 people coming in and out within a given day. These employees included some from other federal agencies, including National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Institutes of Health (NIH), who were required to "return to office" to comply with President Trump's mandate directing all federal departments and agencies to end remote work policies. The Rocky Mountain Regional Office also serves more than 300 teleworkers, comprised of examiners, supervisory patent examiners, judges, and support staff, who use the office space to hold meetings, events, and hearings on relevant issues. The closure of this office means that teleworkers' second duty station is now Alexandria, Virginia, over 1,600 miles from Denver.

It was alarming to discover the entire office was provided with no guidance on the closure that seemingly happened overnight. Employees subject to USPTO's Reduction in Force (RIF) found out when they showed up to the office and their badge no longer worked. Despite the closure announcement and immediate RIFs, the Rocky Mountain Regional Office is not, in fact, closed to employees, as some were informed that they are still required to report to the office until the closure is final, which may be four to six months away. The lack of clear information contradicts actions taken by the administration in September to notify employees working remotely for other regional offices, covered by the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) Chapter 243, that they were required to return to work in person. No notices were sent to any staff in the Rocky Mountain Regional Office represented by NTEU, and the closure followed weeks later. This is not an acceptable way to treat federal employees, and using the cover of a shutdown to close the office and RIF vital staff is abhorrent. Additionally, the timing of this abrupt closure coinciding with this administration's threat to invoke pain during the government shutdown is concerning.

The USPTO has acknowledged that regional offices are good for the health of our patent ecosystem. Opening regional offices, it wrote in its 2024 report, "has had a positive impact on employee recruitment, and has led to the onboarding of over 400 patent examiners" since 2012. Regional patent offices allow the USPTO to reach Americans where they live and work. This is not disputed. The report also states, "With the establishment of the regional offices, the USPTO has been able to reach a more diverse set of stakeholders at a more local scale." Regional offices, the USPTO continued, allow it to customize in-person educational programming, "including seminars or workshops that educate customers about the patent application process or how to employ IP strategies for entrepreneurs." The regional office serves many vital purposes related to an innovator's landscape and economy, and USPTO is downplaying that impact to shutter this office and leave the region without adequate resources and support.

I therefore request the USPTO respond to the following questions:

1. Who made the decision to close the Rocky Mountain Regional Office?
  - a. What did the decision-making process consist of? Please provide a copy of the analysis.
  - b. How many people were consulted? Please provide names and titles of those involved.
2. What, if any, succession plans were considered in the decision to close the office?
3. What is the current devolution plan for USPTO now that the Rocky Mountain Regional Office is closed?
4. Are there plans to close any other regional offices?
5. How many jobs are being impacted by this closure?
6. Where are judges and practitioners expected to report now with this closure?
  - a. Are examiners and judges expected to move to DC to keep their jobs?
7. How are the 300+ telework employees expected to comply with the Return to Office order?
8. How does the USPTO plan to engage the nine states currently served by the Rocky Mountain Regional Office?
  - a. Will they become part of another regional office(s)?
  - b. If so, please detail which states will now be served by which regional office(s).
9. What services are planned for the nine states?
  - a. Please describe the in-person programming planned.
10. Please detail the planned establishment of community outreach offices, where they are located, and the services they will provide.

I request your prompt and thorough response by November 20, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diana DeGette". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Diana" and last name "DeGette" clearly distinguishable.

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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress