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Support for patent office rises as reform bill wanes

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think tank on intellectual property under consideration by retired Judge Michel.

Michel said several companies and law firms have expressed willingness to back a new group that could conduct original research and provide education to policy makers on patent issues.

"I am considering and seeking advice from IP leaders about the utility of creating a research and analysis organization, and I am eager to do it if it's useful and would add value," said Michel.

Nothhaft said he believes the diverse set of often warring patent lobbying groups could unite behind the idea of bolstering support for the patent office. "Then maybe a patent reform bill could get passed," he said.

[The Coalition for Patent Fairness](#) was instrumental in getting the current patent reform bill drafted in the Senate. However, Michel, Nothhaft and others said the group stopped backing the bill after Sen. Leahy [announced an amendment](#) to the bill in March modifying several of its provisions.

The Patent Fairness group--whose members include Cisco Systems, Hewlett-Packard, Intel and Microsoft--issued a warning in September 2009 about amending the original reform bill. Since that time the group has kept a low profile. A representative of the group was not immediately available for an interview.

The Leahy bill sought to put limits on patent infringement suits and increase opportunities to challenge new patents after they were granted. The March amendments watered down provisions for some of those challenges and also made it more difficult to obtain a ruling of willful infringement of a patent.

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