

Squires Vows To Open USPTO Doors To AI Technologies

By [Ivan Moreno](#) · [Listen to article](#)

Law360, Washington, D.C. (November 3, 2025, 5:09 PM EDT) --

New [U.S. Patent and Trademark Office](#) Director John Squires said Friday his agency will embrace artificial intelligence technologies during his tenure, telling attorneys at the [American Intellectual Property Law Association](#)'s annual gathering in Washington, D.C., that AI is "the most transcendent and transformative technology of our time — perhaps of any time."

In his first public remarks since being [sworn in](#) on Sept. 22, Squires said he believes existing patent law, if properly applied, can cover AI innovations now.

"I see eligibility," Squires said, referencing the movie "The Sixth Sense." "And on Halloween, I'm here to tell you and show you — I'm not seeing ghosts. Why? Because we have an existing tried, true and trusted schema to discern patent eligibility."

Squires' position on AI represents another way that he's [reshaping](#) the USPTO. With Squires in charge, along with the actions of his predecessor and now Deputy Director Coke Morgan Stewart, the agency has undergone a dramatic shift in how patents are challenged and adjudicated. Since taking over the agency, Squires has issued a flurry of new guidance and rules, including making it harder to challenge inventions and making more types of technology available for patents, including [machine learning](#).

"If there is any one thing I am going to accomplish in my tenure, it's this — making sure the



John Squires

door to the patent office is wide open to transformative technologies," he said.

Squires quickly ticked off "the litany of actions" he's taken since being in charge and highlighted successes while criticizing the backlog of patent applications that piled up during the prior administration of the office under the leadership of Kathi Vidal. He did not mention the former USPTO director by name.

"We inherited an unexamined patent application backlog that was an absolute dumpster fire," Squires said. He noted that the backlog of unexamined applications jumped from 576,103 in 2020 to a record of 837,928 this January 2025, calling it a "total betrayal of American inventors who deserve better."

Vidal, who served as USPTO director from 2022 to 2024, referred Law360 to a blog she wrote for the agency last year but otherwise declined to comment on Squires' speech. In the blog, she noted that she also inherited a backlog.

"In 2019 the USPTO made a number of decisions to improve patent quality, including increasing the time allotted to examine each patent application and increasing examiner hiring goals to accommodate that additional time," she wrote. She added that other factors, "including a pandemic that had an outsized impact on our application inventories," also contributed to the backlog for both patents and trademarks.

On Friday, Squires praised Stewart's role in reducing the backlog, which he said included reining in travel and having examiners prioritize working on applications.

"We are replacing the wasted time, money and opportunity with 1,100 new examiner hires underway, new incentives and bonuses, and new IT tools, including AI-enhanced search," Squires said.

That tool is a pilot called ASAP!, for AI-Assisted Search Pilot, which allows applicants and examiners to search for prior art faster.

"With AI, there's no excuse for missing prior art," he said.

Squires also touched on the U.S. government shutdown, which started shortly after he was sworn in.

"I've been assured it's nothing personal," he joked, before saying the USPTO is still "open for business" because it is funded by user fees. The office has reserves of more than \$1 billion, Squires said, noting that it's enough to cover operations "through the end of year, and then some if needed."

Squires is confident enough that his office has money to continue operating that he's offered to use some of those reserves to pay troops during the shutdown, he said.

"But for reasons I'll never understand, having spent my career in the private sector, I'm told we can't. But I ask again every single week," he said.

Squires said he was not declaring victory by highlighting the office's successes and recent changes.

"I am declaring we are not going back — ever," he said.

On Oct. 17, Squires announced that he was "reclaiming the director's statutory role" by deciding whether the [Patent Trial and Appeal Board](#) should conduct inter partes reviews and post-grant reviews when patents are challenged. The board had made those decisions since reviews became available in 2012 under the America Invents Act.

While the board had issued lengthy opinions with its institution decisions, in most cases, Squires will not provide many details behind his reasoning on whether to conduct such reviews, USPTO officials [said](#) Wednesday. Some PTAB judges have [expressed concerns](#) about the actions he and Stewart have been taking to limit their role in PTAB procedures.

Squires made clear that changes at the office will continue.

"That is then. This is now," he said. "Now, we are in overdrive."

--Additional reporting by Ryan Davis, Dani Kass and Theresa Schliep. Editing by Dave Trumbore.