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May 7, 2025

Remarks by Coke Morgan Stewart

**Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)**

National Inventors Hall of Fame (NIHF) Illumination Ceremony

Wednesday, May 7, 2025, 1:45 - 3 p.m. ET

USPTO Headquarters, NIHF Museum

Thank you Rini for that kind introduction. And good afternoon to everyone. It's wonderful to see so many past Hall of Fame inductees here today. For the USPTO — it is so exciting to host you at the National Inventors Hall of Fame Museum on our beautiful campus in Alexandria. To the new inductees, thank you for your creativity, your determination, and for everything you have done to improve the lives of so many people. And to your family members, colleagues, and friends who have joined you for today's ceremony, thank you for supporting your inductee through all the trials and tribulations that come with being an inventor.

Also with us are members of an extraordinary group of people: our patent examiners. These examiners reviewed the very inventions that became the innovations that we celebrate today. Examiners have demanding jobs. They must stay at the leading edge of technology, blending their technical expertise with the application of the laws that protect our nation's most valuable resource: intellectual property. Join me in thanking the examiners who examined patents for individuals in the Class of 2025. Can you please stand to be recognized? Thank you.

The USPTO headquarters and the National Inventors Hall of Fame Museum is a perfect spot for this ceremony. This museum is a monument for innovation, and for innovators. It is the place where we honor those who have fundamentally changed the economic and social flight path of the country and the world. It is also the place where we showcase the incredible stories of the extraordinary individuals here today. Beyond this museum, the USPTO works in partnership with the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

We started this collaboration more than half a century ago. And it is through this alliance that we are inspiring the next generation of innovators through programs for students like Camp Invention. In fact, Camp Invention reaches almost 400,000 school children every year. The stories of the inductees — the real-life examples of your work — will have a lasting impact on all the children and teachers who are engaged in NIHF's extensive outreach programs.

When you arrived here today, you each received a lapel pin. It is the same design as the Inventors Hall of Fame medallion. It features two American icons: Thomas Edison, the first inductee in 1973, and one of the nation's most prolific inventors; and President Abraham Lincoln, an ardent supporter of the U.S. patent system, and an inventor himself. He is the only President to have been granted a patent. Circling their profiles are Lincoln's words: "The patent system added the fuel of interest to the fire of genius."

This lapel pin indicates inclusion into a group of the world's greatest innovators, and the Hall of Fame encourages you to wear it with pride.

And now, let's take a look at the display behind me — a display that itself has been patented three times. This Gallery of Icons honors you — and every other inventor who has been inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. It acts as a catalyst that prompts others to learn more about your legacies, and the many ways you've left your mark on this world.

In a few minutes, you'll place your nameplate into this display. This is a small, symbolic act, but it speaks to something larger. The choice of the shape of your nameplate is deliberate. As a hexagon, the structure of the whole gets stronger each year with the addition of each new icon. Icon by icon, it represents the very real way that each of you, through your inventions and patents, adds to the strength of our nation, and the advancement of all humankind.

The collective bond is further reinforced through you — the newest members of the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

It is yet another way that you will help build a hopeful future for generations to come. So, from all of us honored to be here in your presence thank you again, for your invaluable contributions and congratulations.

Now, let's get started.

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Event photos

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Coke Morgan Stewart, Acting Director of the USPTO, gives remarks at the National Inventors Hall of Fame Museum Illumination Ceremony for the 2025 class of inductees at USPTO headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. (Photo by Jay Premack/USPTO)



2025 NIHF inductees Barney Graham (top left) and Jason McLellan (right) talk with patent examiners who worked on their applications, from left: Shanon Foley, Franco Salvoza, and Myron Hill. (Photo by Jay Premack/USPTO)

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