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Kathi Vidal

2022-2024

Kathi Vidal was born in Bethesda, Maryland in 1968, and grew up in a military family. She holds a Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering from Binghamton University which she entered at age 16, a Master of Science in electrical engineering from Syracuse University, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Pennsylvania where she was editor-in-chief of the Penn Law Review. She started her career at General Electric (GE) Aerospace (later Lockheed Martin) as a systems engineer where she became an Artificial Intelligence (AI) expert and designed aircraft systems still keeping our military safe today.

Prior to joining the USPTO, Director Vidal led a litigation group of 270 attorneys at Fish & Richardson P.C., serving on the firm's Management Committee, and was Managing Partner of Winston & Strawn LLP's Silicon Valley office, serving on the firm's Executive Committee. She also clerked for Judge Alvin Anthony Schall on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

On October 26, 2021, President Joe Biden nominated Vidal to be the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the USPTO, and her nomination was confirmed by the Senate on April 5, 2022.

Throughout her tenure as Director, Vidal advocated for policy advancements both domestically and internationally. She worked internationally to strengthen the IP ecosystem and worked across U.S. government and internationally including on international treaties to protect U.S. innovation. She advanced the first-ever AI policy, under which the USPTO released guidance on both the [patentability of AI-assisted inventions](#) and the [patent eligibility of AI inventions](#), and created the collaborative [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) – Emerging Technology \(ET\) Partnership](#). Vidal worked to bring more balance to standard essential patents and to strengthen U.S. leadership in global standards. In September 2024, to advance the USPTO's goal of ensuring fair, transparent, and efficient procedures throughout the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB), the USPTO [issued a final rule](#) formalizing key aspects of the Director Review process.

Director Vidal led a multi-year effort to improve USPTO operations. She led an initiative to ensure that the USPTO was not only a technical resource for the U.S. government, but proactively identified and advanced innovation equities and policy across the U.S. government and internationally including in the courts. She revamped hiring and promotion practices and created the first ever agency-wide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) committee, resulting in a 5% increase in the diversity of the USPTO leadership in a single year. The USPTO also introduced process changes to improve employee experience

while reducing trademark pendency and setting the course for similar reductions for patents. She also expanded the use of AI by the agency and advanced the first pay increase in 15 years for patent examiners, classifiers, attorneys, and administration.

A major focus of Vidal's was increasing access to the innovation ecosystem. Alongside Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo, Director Vidal served as the Vice Chair of the Council for Inclusive Innovation (CI2), which created the first-ever National Strategy for Inclusive Innovation. She also served as co-chair of the Economic Development Administration's National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (NACIE), releasing the first-ever [National Entrepreneurship Strategy](#). At the USPTO, Vidal established focused programs for under-resourced innovators such as the Women's Entrepreneurship (WE) initiative and the Entrepreneurship Essentials for the Military Community. She also expanded the network of [Patent and Trademark Resource Centers](#) in libraries across the country and opportunities for [free legal services](#) for patent applicants. Through the creation of the [Office of Public Engagement](#), Vidal made the USPTO's outreach and educational programs a permanent part of the agency's structure. In 2023, [two additional USPTO outreach office locations](#) in Georgia and New Hampshire were announced as part of the Unleashing American Innovators Act of 2022.

Recognizing the lack of diversity in the IP profession, Vidal expanded the patent bar, created a design patent bar, and expanded the criteria to practice before the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB).

Vidal was named one of Managing IP's top 50 most influential people in IP in 2022 and 2023. In 2024, she was inducted into the Chiefs in Intellectual Property (ChIP) Hall of Fame. She has been listed as one of the top 50 Women in AI and has been featured in Forbes, Fortune, TechCrunch and many IP trade publications for her expertise in AI and innovation policy. She was also inducted as an honorary member into the National Academy of Inventors.

After stepping down as Director of the USPTO in December 2024, Vidal rejoined the litigation department at Winston & Strawn LLP.

Further reading

Press release: [USPTO welcomes new director Kathi Vidal](#)

[USPTO annual reports](#)

[USPTO Director's blog](#)



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