

March 14, 2013

Edith Ramirez
Chairman, Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington DC 20580

Dear Chairman Ramirez:

As president of the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, I understand how much our Central Minnesota and the entire state benefits from the tech economy. At a time when jobs are hard to come by, the tech economy has created hundreds of jobs in our state. Right here in St. Cloud, we see huge benefits from high tech industries, and from our many higher education institutions in the region, which train the high tech industry leaders of tomorrow.

But our members are concerned that patent trolls are getting in the way of new business and technology innovation. Patent trolls take advantage of flaws in our patent system allowing them to abuse and intimidate tech companies like small start-ups.

These companies need to be protected by our patent laws. Right now patent trolls are free to file as many frivolous lawsuits on patent infringement as they want. As a result of these baseless lawsuits, many small companies are forced to settle rather than pay millions in legal fees – millions that could have been spent on development and job creation.

Last year patent trolls sued companies over 5,000 times, costing up to \$80 billion.

Technology changes by the minute. Our patent protection laws should be updated so that businesses have the protection needed to innovate and create new technologies that can boost our economy.

If not, patent trolls will continue to stifle innovation and harm the potential of our tech economy from growing. We hope that you and your colleagues will work together to stand up to patent trolls so that our tech industry can continue to grow, innovate and create much needed jobs.

Sincerely,



Teresa Bohnen
President
St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce