ABA Section of Intellectual Property Law

Founded in 1894, the ABA Section of Intellectual Property Law (ABA-IPL) is the first substantive Section of the American Bar Association. With its strength in the ABA, the ABA-IPL Section has assumed a major role in the development of a fair and balanced system for intellectual property protection. In celebration of its 125th anniversary, the Section commemorates its function as the ABA’s rigorous and innovative voice of intellectual property law.

ABA-IPL furthers the goals of its members and constituencies by sharing expert knowledge and balanced insight on the full spectrum of intellectual property law and practice, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, designs and trade secrets. We have been a leader in advocating and advancing key IP legislation, including the Patent Act of 1952, Copyright Act of 1976, Lanham Act, America Invents Act of 2011 and the Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016. We have been prolific in thoughtfully and successfully developing amicus briefs filed by the ABA with the U.S. Supreme Court and the U.S. Court of the Appeals for the Federal Circuit. We regularly provide our consensus comments to both houses of Congress, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), and U.S. Copyright Office, among others. Today and looking ahead, we are addressing IP reform and modernization as well as ongoing challenges within the dynamic IP landscape.

ABA-IPL advocacy stems from the grassroots work of our six substantive divisions and more than 40 committees—our forums for generating views on emerging and changing policy issues. Because IP intersects so many other areas, we have a proud record of working closely with other ABA Sections.

The Section produces intellectually sound written content, peer reviewed by subject experts. Our expanding publications portfolio features over 60 titles and treatises in all areas of IP. ABA-IPL’s award-winning Landslide® magazine, reaching members bi-monthly in both print and digital formats, has been cited in more than 10 federal appellate IP opinions.

We hold two Section meetings and develop webinars throughout the year. Our major meeting and conference—the ABA-IPL Annual Section Meeting, which is held each spring in the D.C. area, presents outstanding CLE programming on the latest IP topics. IP WEST, our one-and-one-half day institute for addressing emerging IP issues, is heading towards its fourth year. The 24 webinars that we produce annually include the series related to our Landslide® magazine and Section books. All live webinars are now a free benefit for ABA-IPL Section members.

The Section created five Action Groups dedicated to working with different affinity groups: Diversity, Young Lawyers, International Associates, Women in IP, and Law Students. These groups are focused on working together for activities that focus on their needs and collaborative part in contributing to the Section. The Section’s Young Lawyer Fellows Program names two young lawyers every year and provides funding for them to become involved in the Section and develop into future leaders. ABA-IPL champions its diverse member community for the growth of our membership and a shared IP future.

The Section recognizes and highlights our profession’s expertise and promotes leaders for the future. Our Mark T. Banner Award honors individuals or groups that have made an extraordinary impact on IP law and practice, teaching, innovation, bar, or association activities, or to the judiciary. We support and further the Foundation for Advancement of Diversity in IP Law scholarships for underrepresented minority law students pursuing careers in IP law and also co-sponsor, with the Section of Litigation, the Judicial Intern Opportunity Program for diverse students.

The Section is committed to public outreach and education that goes beyond our members and legal professionals. We support pro bono initiatives, including that of the USPTO, and leverage opportunities to educate and convey the reach of intellectual property law. Each of the five videos in our IP IS ALL AROUND US® series produced by ABA-IPL young lawyers shows a different aspect of IP in everyday situations, how IP is part of our lives—and how it is truly all around us.