The views stated in this submission are presented jointly on behalf of the Section of Intellectual Property Law and the Section of International Law (the “Sections”) of the American Bar Association (ABA) only. These comments have not been approved by the ABA House of Delegates or the ABA Board of Governors and therefore may not be construed as representing the policy of the American Bar Association.

The Section of Intellectual Property Law and the Section of International Law of the American Bar Association (collectively, the “Sections”) hereby respond to the solicitation for public opinion on draft regulations (“Draft Regulations”) regarding inventors’ remuneration for the People’s Republic of China (“PRC”), published for comments on November 12, 2012, by the State Intellectual Property Office (“SIPO”).

The combined membership of the two Sections includes over 30,000 lawyers. Most of the members are based in the United States of America, but a substantial number have lived and worked abroad, including in the PRC, and some do so currently. Members of the Sections have substantial expertise in intellectual property (“IP”) rights laws in the United States and around the world. Our membership includes lawyers in the law departments of businesses and the faculties of law schools, as well as in private practice and in government. In addition, many non-U.S. attorneys are active as Associate Members in the Sections and have contributed their expertise and insights to the Sections’ work.

The Sections welcome the goals of the drafters of the Draft Regulations to increase innovation and develop talent through science and technology. The Sections appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Regulations to assist China in their pursuit of these goals. These Comments submitted to SIPO offer the perspective of the Sections based on our members’ experience in the United States and abroad in the fields of IP rights and international business law. Given the shortness of time, these comments are not intended to be comprehensive, but reflect some of the issues raised by our members. The Sections hope that these comments will assist the SIPO as it evaluates these Draft Regulations. We welcome future opportunities to submit additional comments and urge the SIPO to allow full notice and public comment on all future drafts.

* The notice of request for comments was published by the SIPO at http://www.sipo.gov.cn/tz/gz/201211/t20121112_769843.html. The Task Force that drafted these comments included Joyce Chang, Yee Wah Chin, Faisal Daupota, Paula K. Davis, Meph Jia Gui, Sophie Jiang, He Jing, Kening Li, Benjamin Liu, MaCharri Vormdram-Jones, Gregory Voss, and Aaron Wininger. These comments are based on unofficial translations of the Draft Regulations.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A major focus of the Comments relates to clarifying numerous terms and provisions in the Draft Regulations, leading to more legal certainty for inventors and entities. The Sections urge clarification of issues, including the right to establish private agreements between entities and inventors regarding remuneration, the applicability of such agreements to all of the Draft Regulations, and an explanation of how a private agreement could potentially be held invalid (Articles 9, 10, 19, and 40); the relational level and intersection of these Draft Regulations with other laws such as copyright, trademark, plant variety, software, know-how, and trade secret laws (Articles 21 and 22) as well as the relational level and intersection of these Draft Regulations with local or provincial laws and regulations; clarification of the roles of the different administrative offices in order to ensure that the appropriate office remains accountable and avoid conflicting instructions (Articles 3, 34, 38, 39, 41 and 42); clarification of the term “technical secrets” (Article 4); and clarification of the term “inventor” for non-patent inventions (Article 5).

Further, the Sections recommend removing some requirements included in the Draft Regulations, as these requirements will be overly burdensome for many entities. These include any requirement to track and provide remuneration for technical secrets (Articles 4 and 25); requirements specifically defined by the Draft Regulations (as opposed to negotiated and established by the entity itself) relating to the procedures for reporting inventions and responding to inventors (Articles 6 and 12-14); a requirement that governmental agencies have authority to examine the work contracts, entity policy, etc., relevant to service inventions (Article 34); and clarification of the implementation details for computer software or, alternatively, deletion of software from the Draft Regulations (Article 45).

Additionally, the Sections suggest at least lowering, if not deleting altogether, the specified remuneration amounts listed in the sixth and seventh paragraphs of Article 22, and removing the requirement for offering a right of first refusal to an inventor if the entity intends to assign intellectual property rights, as this is contrary to international norms (Article 29).
GENERAL COMMENTS RELATING TO THE DRAFT REGULATIONS

The Sections recognize and appreciate the efforts made in the Draft Regulations to provide incentives for innovation and development. We understand that the Draft Regulations were written to encourage the disclosure and use of more inventions while ensuring that the proper rights of both inventors and entities are recognized. However, we are concerned that too much regulation will be overly burdensome on some entities. Tight administrative controls will likely lead to increased tension in the balance between private rights and inventorship rights, which could result in lowered productivity. Furthermore, a lack of clarity in some provisions will lead to confusion and increased tension between entities and inventors. It is imperative that the proper balance of equities be reached without overregulating entities and their relationships with inventors.

The Sections are encouraged that the Draft Regulations seem to allow continued use of agreements between the entity and the inventors and policy statements to guide many aspects of inventor remuneration and awards. Yet, in the specific article which provides for agreements and policy statements, namely Article 19, the Draft Regulations appear to be contradictory to this contract-first principle. Other articles are similarly confusing in that some articles mention the contract-first principle while others do not, leading to the question of whether agreements and policy statements apply to all situations covered by the Draft Regulations. Moreover, it is unclear how disputes will be handled. Thus, the Sections recommend clarification of the applicability of alternative private agreements to the whole of the Draft Regulations.

Further, guidance is needed to explain the relationship of these Draft Regulations with the Patent Law and the Implementing Regulations. If conflicts arise, such as terminology having a different construction in any two of these documents, now or in the future as these documents are amended, which document preempts the others? Similarly, the jurisdictional relationship of these Draft Regulations with local law is unclear. What is the relationship of these Draft Regulations with local or provincial laws and regulations? Conflicts may exist between the Draft Regulations and local regulations, such as differences in the amount required for remuneration or the requirements for confidentiality. These Draft Regulations do not explain the relational levels—i.e., that the laws and regulations, in particular these Draft Regulations, will override the local laws and regulations. The Sections suggest that the relational level of these Draft Regulations be clarified prior to promulgation.

Additional concerns are raised by reference in several articles to “technical secrets” and reference to “other intellectual property rights.” The term “technical secrets” is not a defined term, and it is unclear whether this term refers to trade secrets or a subset thereof, know-how, or some other property right. These types of rights are difficult to track, and requirements for inventor remuneration or awards for such rights would add a great burden to entities. Moreover, having an undefined term such as “technical secrets” has the potential for misinterpretation. The Sections recommend that SIPO reconsider a requirement for remuneration and awards for technical secrets.

As for “other intellectual property rights,” this term is too vague. This appears to be an extension beyond patent rights, and as such, the Sections request that SIPO reconsider using such
term or otherwise clarify the intersection with other intellectual property right laws such as copyright and trademark law, plant variety law, and software law.

The following comments relate to specific provisions of the Draft Regulations and are submitted by the Sections to raise particular concerns. The draft provisions addressed are set forth in italics. Draft provisions which are not addressed are not included in these Comments.

**SPECIFIC COMMENTS RELATING TO THE DRAFT REGULATIONS**

**Chapter 1 General Provisions**

**Article 3**

The patent administration department under the State Council, the agriculture administration department, the forestry administration department (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Administrative Departments for IP Affairs"), the science and technology administration department and the labor administration department are responsible for supervision and administration of country wide service invention system in accordance with division of their respective responsibilities.

Administrative department for IP affairs, science and technology administration departments and labor administration departments at the local people’s government at above the county level are responsible for, according to the division of their respective responsibilities, supervision and administration of service-invention systems of respective administrative regions.

Article 3 envisions supervisory and management roles for many government offices with potentially overlapping roles at both the national level and the local level. Without a clear indication of the office with the ultimate responsibility and authority for interpreting and implementing the rule, employers and employees may be subject to conflicting or alternative interpretations. The Sections recommend that the Regulations specify the roles of the different administrative offices to ensure the appropriate office remains accountable and to avoid conflicting instructions.

The language of Article 3 is ambiguous as to whether the county level government agency is responsible for the administration or supervision of the Regulations. The Sections believe that a county level government agency is not suitable (e.g., may not have sufficient expertise) for the administration and supervision of the Regulations, and involvement at a local level may create too much inconsistency throughout the country. To avoid any likelihood of confusion, the Sections recommend that the language be clarified to exclude the county level.

**Article 4**

In the Regulations, “invention” refers to the achievement of mental-creation, which is made within the territory of People’s Republic of China and is eligible subject matter of patent right, right of new varieties of plants, exclusive right of electrical circuit design, or subject matter protectable as technical secrets.

Article 4 defines “invention” broadly as the subject of various intellectual property rights—patents, new plant varieties, integrated circuit layout design, and technical secrets. However, not all of the original enabling intellectual property rights law contemplates service inventions or
remuneration to the inventor. It is unclear what happens when substantive intellectual property laws and regulations conflict with these Draft Regulations. The terminology of “technical secret” is unique, and its definition is unclear. The Sections recommend revising Article 4 to reference the specific intellectual property rights laws including, in particular, the law that defines “know how” or “trade secrets” or both, depending on SIPO’s intent by this term.

Article 5

“ Inventor ” as mentioned in the Regulations means any person who makes creative contributions to the substantive features of an invention.

Any person who, during the course of accomplishing the invention, is responsible only for organizational work, or who only offers facilities for making use of material and technical means, or who takes part in other auxiliary functions, shall not be considered as an inventor.

Article 5 uses “creative contribution” to define an inventor, which may be appropriate for patentable technology, but less appropriate for other types of intellectual property rights such as plant variety protection, where the phrase “creativity” is not used. The Sections recommend that the definition of inventor clarify the interpretation of creative contribution, especially with respect to non-patent intellectual property rights where, unlike patentable technology, the protection is not based on whether the technology involves “creativity” or “inventiveness.”

Article 6

The state encourages the entity which engages in research and development to establish the intellectual property management system for service invention and set up specialized department or designate specialized staff responsible for the IP management, or commission a professional agency to manage IP related affairs on behalf of the entity.

Entity engaging in research and development shall establish the invention reporting system, or reach agreement with inventors, clearly define the entity and the inventor’s rights, obligations and responsibilities upon completion of an invention, and timely determine the ownership of the rights and interests relating to the invention.

Entity engaging in research and development shall establish award and remuneration system for service invention or reach agreement with inventors on the award and remuneration. When an entity establishes the above systems, it shall listen to and consider the opinions and suggestions of relevant persons, and disclose the invention reporting system and the award and remuneration system to research staff and other relevant persons.

The Sections recommend that Article 6 articulate general principles or objectives of an entity’s intellectual property system and the related remuneration system. Otherwise, implementation of the described system may be overly burdensome and may limit innovation on how to implement the system itself.

As the article currently stands, Article 6 appears to require research and development organizations to establish various remuneration and service invention management mechanisms, but the exact contour of this obligation is not clear. For example, no explanation exists for how an “entity engaged in research and development” is defined. It is unclear what the repercussion of non-compliance is. Also, it is unclear how Article 6, which mandates the adoption of various service invention policies, does not conflict with Article 9, which permits parties to develop
service invention policies or to rely on the default rule. Additionally, the specialized department or staff responsible for intellectual property management, as described in Paragraph 1, and the invention reporting system of Paragraph 2 amount to additional compliance regimes for entities, increasing the costs of doing business in the country. In the absence of an agreement with the inventor, the requirements of this article may be overly burdensome for some entities, making it difficult to operate in such a regulated environment.

Therefore, we recommend that Article 6 be written to allow flexibility and latitude for entities to implement the most robust, efficient, and innovative system in accordance with the entity’s business model. Instead of providing additional details as listed above, we recommend that the objectives be broadened so that businesses are given the freedom to operate in the most beneficial environment for their business.

Chapter 2 Ownership of Invention

Article 7
The following inventions belong to service invention
1, the invention made in execution of the duties assigned by the entity to which he belongs;
2, the invention made in execution of any task, other than his own duty, which was assigned to him by the entity to which he belongs;
3, the invention made within one year from his retirement, resignation or from termination of his employment or human resources relationship with the entity to which he previously belonged, where the invention relates to his own duty or the other task assigned to him by the entity to which he previously belonged, but except new varieties of plants which are subject to other provisions made by the state;
4, the invention made mainly by using the money, equipment, spare parts, raw material or technical materials which are not disclosed to the public of the entity he belongs to; but except there is an agreement on returning funding or fees for the usage to the entity to which he belongs, or using the material technical means of the entity to which he belongs merely for verification or testing upon completion.

Article 7, paragraph 4 relates to physical materials of the entity; however, it seems that the clause should also include technical information of the entity. For example, Article 7, paragraph 4, first sentence may be amended to read: “the invention made mainly by using the money, equipment, spare parts, raw material, technical materials, or technical information which are not disclosed to the public of the entity he belongs to”.

Additionally, Article 7, paragraph 4 provides exclusions to the use of entities’ resources that are not available to the public. The significance of the exclusion clause is profound for the entity and inventor. Further, the Chinese definition of “invention” is not always clear when compared with United States and European standards of conception and reduction to practice. Any approved, excluded use of entity resources must be clearly agreed in advance. For avoidance of doubt, the second clause should be clarified. For example, “but except where there is a prior written agreement on returning funding or fees for the usage to the entity to which he belongs, or where there is prior written permission of the entity for using the material technical means of the entity to which he belongs merely for verification or testing upon completion.”
The exclusion of inventions made “using the material technical means of the entity to which he belongs merely for verification or testing upon completion” is also unjustified, as it may create too much of a loophole. Thus, the Sections recommend that it should be removed. Here, the Regulations appear to make a distinction between “completion” and “verification or testing” of an invention, but the Chinese law is this area is not well developed (e.g., no clear definition of conception vs. reduction to practice, in contrast to patent law in the U.S.). If this phrase is to be included, it should be clarified that the use of materials for verification and testing is “with the prior consent of and appropriate compensation to the entity.”

Article 9
The entity may enter into an agreement with the inventor on the right regarding the invention which is relevant to the business of the entity, such as the right of application for intellectual property right, or protecting as technique secret, or making public. The provisions in this Chapter of the Regulations shall apply in the absence of the above mentioned agreement.

The Sections recommend that these Regulations apply in the absence of the above mentioned agreement or other provisions made by the entity. It should be clarified that the agreement between the entity and inventor on the right regarding the invention may set forth full award and remuneration (Article 8) terms that supersede provisions that are applicable in the absence of the above mentioned agreement. This will provide clarity as to which articles apply in certain situations, as described in our general comments above. Therefore, we recommend that Article 9 be amended as follows: “The entity may enter into an agreement with the inventor on the right regarding the invention which is relevant to the business of the entity, such as the right of application for intellectual property right, or protecting as technique secret, or making public and the award and remuneration for the inventor. The provisions in these Regulations shall apply in the absence of the above mentioned agreement.”

Chapter 3 Report of Invention and Application for Intellectual Property Right
Article 10
Where the inventor makes an invention relevant to the business of the entity to which he belongs, he shall, except there is an agreement or other provisions made by the entity otherwise, report the invention to the entity within two months from the date the invention is completed.
Where the invention is made by two or more inventors, the report shall be made by the inventors jointly.

Article 10 creates a new category of inventions known as “an invention relevant to the business” as the basis of reporting. It is unclear what concept is included in “an invention relevant to the business” that is not already included in the Article 7 definition. We understand that this article is intended to cast a wide net of reporting obligations to capture the situation where an inventor may fail to report or conceal a service invention under the pretext that is it not a service invention. However, this requirement does introduce an added level of complexity because an unscrupulous inventor may still conceal the invention and instead argue that the invention is not relevant to the business. Conversely, it may entrap a good faith inventor employee unaware of the full scope of the employer’s business. Companies can periodically request that its employees disclose the filing of any new patent, plant variety, or integrated circuit protection, filed in his or her own name, if the misappropriation of a service invention is a concern.
Perhaps a better category to require reporting would be an “invention in the field of activity of the entity.” This terminology narrows the scope of what is reportable because it is only those areas which the entity actually practices, not everything that is tangentially “relevant.”

Article 10 allows employers and employees to privately contract or develop alternative rules regarding the preparation and submission of invention reports. However, articles in the remainder of the Chapter do not contain similar language. It is unclear if Articles 11 through 17 are default rules that can be varied or mandatory rules. For the purpose of comparison, articles in Chapter 4 concerning remuneration clearly state within each article whether the parties can reach alternative private arrangements. We suggest the addition of a clear statement that parties may enter into an alternative arrangement for the remaining Articles 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

**Article 12**

*Where an inventor claims the invention he reports is a non service invention, the entity shall, within two months from the receipt of the report which is in conformity with Article 11, give a written reply; failure of giving such a reply within the above mentioned time period is deemed as entity’s acceptance that the invention is a non service invention.*

The Sections recommend that Article 12 should permit employers to develop their own invention reporting and response policy, which is consistent with our recommendation in Article 6 that allows for employers to develop systems that best match the employers’ business needs.

**Article 13**

*Where the entity claims the reported non service invention to be a service invention in the written reply, it shall state the grounds. Where the inventor presents a written counterclaim within two months from the receipt of the reply from the entity, the parties involved may resolve the dispute in accordance with Article 42 of the Regulations; where no counterclaim is presented, the inventor is deemed as in agreement that the invention is a service invention.*

The Sections recommend that Article 13 should permit employers to develop their own invention reporting and response policy, which is consistent with our recommendation in Article 6 that allows for employers to develop systems that best match the employers’ business needs.

**Article 14**

*The entity shall, within 6 months from the service invention reporting date, decide whether to apply for intellectual property right, protect as technical secrets or publish and shall inform the inventor of the decision in a written notice. Where the entity fails to inform the inventor within the time limit as provided in the above paragraph, the inventor may send a written inquiry urging the entity to reply; if the entity fails to reply after 1 month of the inventor’s written inquiry, the invention shall be deemed to be protected as technical secrets by the entity, and the inventor has the right to have the compensation as provided in Article 25. If the entity afterwards applies and obtains domestic
intellectual property right of this invention, the inventor is entitled to get award and remuneration as provided in the Regulations.

The Sections recommend that Article 14 should permit employers to develop their own invention reporting and response policy, which is consistent with our recommendation in Article 6 that allows for employers to develop systems that best match the employers’ business needs.

Chapter 4 Award and Remuneration of Service Invention

Article 19
The entity may enter into an agreement with the inventor, or provide it in its policy formulated in accordance with the laws, on the procedure, manner and amount of the award and remuneration. The agreement or policy shall inform the inventor the right he is entitled to, the way to seek relief, and in accordance with Articles 20 and 23 of the Regulations. Any agreement or policy eliminating or limiting the right to which the inventor is entitled in accordance with the Regulations is invalid.

The first paragraph of Article 19 describes an allowable agreement between an entity and an inventor or a policy statement of the entity which may be established to detail the procedure, manner, and amount of the award and remuneration to which an inventor is entitled. This is consistent with many other articles (e.g., Articles 21, 22, 24, and 27) of the Draft Regulations which describe situations in which no agreement has been entered into between the entity and the inventor, indicating that it is allowable to have an agreement. Yet, the second paragraph of Article 19 contradicts the first paragraph, stating that any agreement or policy eliminating or limiting the inventor’s right is invalid. If any limitation to the inventor’s rights invalidates such an agreement or policy, then there would be no reason to enter into such an agreement or policy. The Sections do not believe that this is the intended meaning of the second paragraph, and to avoid a lack of clarity, the Sections suggest that the second paragraph be deleted.

It is further suggested that a statement should be added after the first paragraph to clarify that the agreement or policy statement may include a reasonable flat fee payment per granted service invention patent.

Article 20
When the entity decides the procedure, manner and amount of the award and remuneration given to the inventor, it shall listen to the opinions of inventors. The entity shall inform the inventor of the information on the economic benefit earned by the entity by exploiting, assigning, licensing of service invention.

Several terms and phrases in Article 20 are unclear and should be explained better. For example, in the first paragraph, Article 20 says that the entity shall listen to the opinions of the inventors. It is unclear whether this refers to the inventor’s opinions on the overall setup of the entity’s policy or, alternatively, the inventor’s opinions on the actual awards and remuneration that each inventor receives. Does this refer to the percentage of contribution of each inventor to a particular invention? What is intended by the phrase “shall listen to the opinions”? This could mean that the entity must simply ask for the inventors’ opinions with no obligation to act upon the opinions, or this could mean that the entity must incorporate the inventors’ opinions. The
intent is not clear, nor is it clear how to measure whether an entity has listened to the opinions of inventors. Therefore, the Sections recommend that clarifications on these points be made in the text of Article 20.

The second paragraph of Article 20 imposes undue obligations on entities. This article does not define with specificity what information must be provided. For example, how much detail must be provided to each inventor? This information could be provided as a report, but if it is expected that the entity’s financial records be open to audit from inventors, this could be especially burdensome for the entity. The Sections recommend that this article be clarified to explain the intent of these requirements.

Article 21
Where the entity has not entered into an agreement with the inventor on the award to the service invention, and has not provided the award to the service invention in its policy formulated, it shall, for the service invention granted an patent right or the right of new varieties of plants, award all of the inventors a sum of money as prize which shall not be less than 200% of the monthly average wages of the workers in the entity; and for the service invention granted other intellectual property rights, award to all of the inventors a sum of money as prize which shall not be less than the monthly average wages of the workers in the entity.

Article 21 imposes an onerous burden to employers in that they will be effectively penalized for filing a patent, regardless of whether that patent is exploited or not. Furthermore, this article refers to awards for other intellectual property rights. This appears to be an extension beyond patent rights. The Sections suggest that this wording be eliminated from Article 21.

Article 22
Where the entity has not entered into an agreement with the inventor on the remuneration and has not provided the remuneration in its rules and Regulations, it shall, upon the exploitation of the intellectual property rights, provides the remuneration to all related inventors by one of the following ways
1, within the valid term of the intellectual property, extract a sum of money which shall be no less than 5% from the operating profit of exploiting the patent right or the right of new varieties of plants, or no less than 3% from the operating profit of exploiting the other intellectual property right;
2, within the valid term of the intellectual property, extract a sum of money which shall be no less than 0.5% from the revenue of exploiting the patent right or the right of new varieties of plants, or no less than 0.3% from the revenue of exploiting the other intellectual property right;
3, within the valid term of the intellectual property, references the amount of the above two items, determine the amount of annual remuneration in accordance with the reasonable multiple of the personal salary of the inventor;
4, references the reasonable multiple of the amount of the above items 1 and 2, determine the lump sum amount of remuneration to be paid to the inventor.

The accumulated amount of the remuneration above will not be more than 50% of the accumulated operating profit of exploiting the intellectual property right.

Where the entity has not entered into an agreement with the inventor on the remuneration and has not provided the remuneration in its policy, it shall, upon the assignment, license to the third
party of the intellectual property right, shall extract a sum of money which shall be no less than 20% from the net income of assignment or license as a remuneration to the inventor.

The sixth paragraph of Article 22 is problematic in that it allows for an accumulated remuneration amount up to 50% of the accumulated operating profit from exploitation of an intellectual property right. Consider, for example, a product which is covered by ten patents. If each invention has one inventor who receives the maximum remuneration of 50% of operating profit, the amount of remuneration paid by the entity would be 500% of the operating profit. Even if only two patents with two separate inventors cover a product, a 50% remuneration rate would inhibit production of the product.

The seventh paragraph of Article 22 states that, where no agreement or policy statement exists and an entity assigns or licenses an intellectual property right, the inventor remuneration shall be not less than 20% of the net income of an assignment or license. Again, if multiple intellectual property rights cover a product, 20% remuneration could prohibit entities from assigning or licensing rights to others. Thus, the Sections suggest at least lowering, if not deleting altogether, the remuneration amounts listed in the sixth and seventh paragraphs of Article 22.

**Article 25**

*Where the entity decides to protect the service invention as a technical secret, it shall pay a reasonable compensation to the inventor in accordance with the provisions of this Chapter.*

Article 25 raises several concerns. First, it is noted that this article does not contain the language which is present in numerous other articles, limiting the article to situations in which the entity has not entered into an agreement with the inventor or the entity does not have a policy statement. Does the absence of such language in this article imply that compensation for technical secrets is non-negotiable? The Sections recommend that Article 25 be deleted, in that it will be overly burdensome to entities to track such inventions and their related compensation. Moreover, Article 25 states that the compensation should be paid in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, yet it is unclear which provisions are related. If Article 25 is maintained, a sentence should be added stating that the entity and inventor may agree in advance on reasonable compensation for technical secrets which the entity wishes to maintain.

**Chapter 5 Exploitation of Intellectual Property Right in Service Invention**

**Article 29**

*Where an entity intends to assign intellectual property rights of a service invention, the inventor is entitled to the right of first refusal under the same conditions.*

Article 29 requires a right of first refusal to the inventor if an entity intends to assign intellectual property rights. This is contrary to international norms. If an entity owns intellectual property rights, the entity is entitled to exploit that property without consulting with its employees. Further, if an employee were to exercise the rights, it could be in direct conflict with his contract for employment. In light of these conflicts, the Sections urge SIPO to delete this Article 29.
Article 30
Where state-owned enterprises and institutions, within 3 years from obtaining the intellectual property right on the service invention, neither exploit or have necessary preparation for implementing without any justifiable reasons, nor assign or license others to exploit, the inventor shall, under the situation that the ownership of the service invention is not changed, may implement or license others to exploit the intellectual property right and enjoy the relevant benefit in accordance with the agreement with the entity.

Article 30 provides special circumstances for state-owned enterprises and institutions and their inventors. Under this article, when an entity that is state-owned decides not to exploit, assign or license an intellectual property right, the inventor gains the right to do so after three years. As such, an employer that is a state-owned enterprise or institution will not have the same rights to exploit their patents at a later date as compared to an employer that is not a state-owned enterprise or institution. This differentiation could be confusing to inventors, who may try to exploit an idle invention of a non-state-owned enterprise and thus violate Article 17 of the Draft Regulations.

Chapter 6 Supervision, Inspection and Legal Responsibility

Article 34
The supervisory management supervises and inspects the implementation of the service invention system made by the entity in accordance with the laws. During the supervision and inspection, the supervisory management has the authority to examine the work contracts, entity policy, etc. relevant to the service invention, and inquire the parties involved. Both of the entity and the inventor shall provide the relevant materials and situation faithfully.

The Sections urge that the phrase “examine the work contracts, entity policy, etc. relevant to the service invention, and” of this Article be deleted. It is believed that no real purpose is served by this kind of examination of entity contracts and policies, other than perhaps to encourage the entities to have them in place, but the remaining articles of the Regulations sufficiently serve that purpose. On the other hand, despite Article 35, the risk of the entity losing its trade secrets (employment contract may contain, for example, salary information), and/or being unduly burdened by the examinations (the extent and frequency not being specified) far outweigh any benefit of this kind of examination, especially if it is done by a county level government agency.

Article 36
Where the inventor violates the provisions of the Regulations and applies for intellectual property for the service invention, the right granted under the application will be entitled to the entity, and all of the benefits obtained by the inventor shall be returned to the entity. Where the entity violates the provisions of the Regulations and applies for intellectual property right for the non service invention, the right granted under the application will be entitled to the inventor, and all of the benefits obtained by the entity shall be returned to the inventor.

Article 36 articulates legal liabilities for failing to observe one of the requirements under Article 17. Article 17 prohibits an entity from (1) disclosing to the public a non-service invention created by its employee(s); (2) applying for a patent under the entity’s own name on the non-
service invention created by its employee(s); and (3) transferring to any third party a non-service invention created by its employee(s). Conversely, Article 17 also prohibits employees from disclosing, applying for a patent, and transferring a service invention which belongs to the entity.

In particular, Article 36 specifies that in the event that the entity applies for a patent on a non-service invention, thereby failing to observe the requirements of the Draft Regulations, the benefits received therefrom shall be returned to the employee-inventor, and vice versa. However, Article 36 fails to mention anything about the losses suffered by the non-violating party. The benefits received may be minimal, but the harm caused to the non-violating party may be substantial. In such a situation, when such events were done intentionally or willfully, rewarding profits only is an inadequate remedy. Further, the parties have suffered costs associated with procurement of the intellectual property rights. These costs should be taken into account.

In addition, Article 36 fails to mention anything about the legal consequences of subpoints (1) and (3) of Article 17—public disclosure and transfer of the invention.

**Article 38**

Where the inventor claims that his authorship has been infringed, he may, request the administrative department of intellectual property right of the people’s government at the county level to handle it, or institute legal proceedings before the People’s Court.

Where the administrative department of intellectual property right of the people’s government at the county level or People’s Court finds the infringement of inventorship, the infringer will be ordered to stop the infringement, apology and compensate for loss. The authorities for granting or registering intellectual property right shall correct the inventorship recorded in the relevant documents and make an announcement based on the effective ruling.

Where infringement of inventorship of two or more inventors or infringement of inventorship for twice or more times is found, infringer shall be imposed on a penalty under 50,000 RMB and be announced for the infringement by the administrative department of intellectual property right of the people’s government at the county level.

Article 38 raises a concern in that the ability to raise such a case at the county level or at the courts is confusing. If this is an “infringement,” then it should be handled by the court. Alternatively, if this is an inventorship or ownership issue, it should also be handled by the court. Allowing such cases to be raised administratively at the county level will result in confusion and lack of consistency.

**Article 40**

Where the entity policy or the agreement entered into with inventors is not in accordance with Article 19.1 of the Regulations, or considered to be invalid according to Article 19.2 of the Regulations, and a loss to the inventor is caused, the entity shall be liable for damages.

The Sections recommend deletion or clarification of Article 40. The second paragraph of Article 19 contradicts the allowable private agreements of the first paragraph of Article 19 (see comments for Article 19), thus making the phrase “or considered to be invalid according to Article 19.2 of the Regulations” unnecessary. Moreover, the first paragraph of Article 19 does
not describe how an agreement can be held “not in accordance with the Regulations,” nor does any other article in the Draft Regulations. Thus, Article 40 is either an unnecessary section, or the Draft Regulations should be revised to explain why an agreement or policy statement would be held not in accordance.

**Article 43**

*Upon the application for intellectual property of the invention, where the involved parties have dispute over the ownership of the invention, the department granting the intellectual property right may, based on the request of the concerned parties, discontinue the relevant process of the intellectual property right.*

*Upon the settlement of the dispute over the ownership, the concerned parties may, with the effective legal instruments, request for restoration of the relevant process of the intellectual property right.*

Paragraph 2 of Article 43 uses the term “effective legal instruments” when referring to a document which requests restoration of the relevant process for the intellectual property right. However, this article does not suggest any documents which would be effective or provide any guidance as to what should be included in such a document to make it “effective” or, alternatively, why it would be found ineffective. Would a settlement agreement suffice as an effective legal document, and if so, what would be the required provisions? The Sections suggest that this term be clarified.

**Chapter 7 Supplementary Articles**

**Article 45**

*The Regulations are applicable for the service works of computer software.*

Article 45 extends the remuneration regulation to the service works of computer software even though, as the explanation notes acknowledge, it is not a perfect fit. The lack of operational details of how to extend it in practice creates several sources of conflict.

First, the definition of service works in Article 16 of the Copyright Law is different from the definition of service invention under this regulation and this divergence creates a potential for conflict. For example, the copyright of a computer software work vests in the employer organization if the work is created in the course of performing work duties and if the work is performed with the material support of the employer organization under the Copyright Law. However, the definition of a service invention in this proposal only requires that one of the two conditions be met. Therefore, if an employee creates a software program outside the assigned job duties but nonetheless uses material resources provided by the company, it is not a service work under the copyright law and the copyright will vest in the employee author, contrary to this proposal. Because the Copyright Law is a higher level law, this regulation cannot alter the treatment of the software copyright where it conflicts with the Copyright Law, creating potential confusion.

Second, computer software works can be the subject of copyrights as well as a component of a patent invention. The explanation text emphasizes that it is the software program as a copyright subject that is a service work, but the proposed regulation refers to software generally, blurring
the boundary between the IP rights of a product and the product itself. As a result, it is unclear how the regulation should apply if the software is a service invention for the purpose of copyright law but a patent claiming the software component is not a service invention.

Third, Article 16 of the Copyright Law contemplates copyright service works beyond computer software and specifically enumerates architectural designs, industrial designs and maps. It is unclear why computer software is singled out from other copyright service works for protection.

Fourth, because the proposed regulation does not fit a software copyright exactly, it is unclear which articles apply to software copyright. For example, Chapter 3 discusses the right of the employer IP owner to apply for the IP rights at issue which is not applicable to computer software copyright because no formality is required under the Copyright Law. However, a separate registration scheme exists for computer software and it is unclear whether Chapter 3 applies to such registration process or not.

The Sections recommend more implementation details for computer software or, alternatively, deleting this provision.

CONCLUSION

The Sections hope that this submission is useful. We would be pleased to respond to any questions regarding these Comments, or to provide any additional comments or information that may be of assistance. The Sections welcome future opportunities to comment as the Draft Regulations are finalized.