

WISCONSIN ALUMNI RESEARCH FOUNDATION

November 8, 1984

Dr. John F. Due
Chair of Senate Committee
on Honorary Degree
University of Illinois
496 Commerce West
1206 S. 6th St.
Champaign, IL 61820

Dear Dr. Due:

It is my pleasure to strongly endorse your committee's consideration of Mr. Norman J. Latker for the award of an appropriate Honorary Degree from the University of Illinois.

My association with Mr. Latker began in the early 1960's, and it is my observation that since that time he has moved with selfless determination, even, at times, in the face of considerable risk to his professional career, to champion the cause of innovation so that the public truly will benefit from the expenditure of Federal research dollars. It was his ability, through example and persuasion, and by mustering others who were of like persuasion, to convince many that the fruits of intellectual property arising from Federal grants and contracts were best transferred for public benefit through utilization of the patent system - or, in other words, by means of the Constitutional concept.

The end result of Mr. Latker's effort was, I believe, exemplified by the passage of Public Law 96-517 in 1980, which fundamentally permitted small businesses, universities, and other non-profit organizations to exercise the first right of ownership in any invention made under grants or contracts with an Agency of the Federal Government. The perceived advantages to flow from such Law have been realized in practice. Since the passage of that legislation, and because of the certainty of ownership of the inventions by the universities under that Law, additional research funds have been flowing to the university sector from private, primarily industrial, sources. Thus, the reliance upon Federal funding has been reduced and, therefore, the recent cutbacks in Federal funding have had a less severe impact upon the university research community.

It is my understanding that the Law has also substantially increased the number of universities and colleges engaging in a technology transfer activity utilizing the patent system. This conclusion is primarily drawn from inquiries for guidance which I have received and the observed dramatic increase in the membership of the Society of the University Patent Administrators, a professional society devoted to increasing the knowledge and ability of the university community to engage in the technology transfer function.

As will be evident from the foregoing remarks, Mr. Latker's continued perseverance in an unpopular cause has had profound and long term effects which can only be interpreted as being beneficial to the public interest. Mr. Latker's efforts and accomplishments are deserving of public recognition and I urge your committee to favorably consider awarding him an Honorary Degree.

Sincerely,


Howard W. Bremer