

## *Unregistered Patents & Gender Equality*

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Women do not get a fair share when it comes to patenting. They are consistently underrepresented among patent rights holders worldwide and are far less likely to own patents, even in fields otherwise nearing gender parity. This Article therefore proposes an unconventional new regime of unregistered patent rights to help women and other disadvantaged inventors gain greater access to patent protections. Patents are a glaring exception to the unregistered protections provided in other areas of intellectual property, which are inherently more egalitarian.

Our proposal would be only an interim arrangement, limited in its duration and scope, for use only until women achieve greater equality in access to registered patent rights. It would raise a number of challenges and could not purport to solve all of the challenges facing female innovators. Nonetheless, our proposed regime would benefit women and others by providing protection at no cost, without filing or renewal fees, and more importantly, by providing protection even for inventors with little or no knowledge of the patent system and its importance in protecting innovation.

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