



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
13.05.2015 Bulletin 2015/20

(51) Int Cl.:
A47F 1/12 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **14189635.7**

(22) Date of filing: **21.10.2014**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AL AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MK MT NL NO PL PT RO RS SE SI SK SM TR
Designated Extension States:
BA ME

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(30) Priority: **21.10.2013 US 201314058796**

(54) **Merchandising system and method of use**

(57) A merchandising system (10) for a displaying a plurality of products is disclosed. The system includes a base (200) and a proximal member (500). The base (200) includes a product-supporting surface which defines a longitudinal axis. The proximal member (500) is disposed in mechanical cooperation with a proximal portion (202) of the base (200). The proximal member (500) includes

an arcuate portion (510) extending between a first lateral side (512) and a second lateral side (514) of the proximal member (500). The proximal member (500) includes a scalloped portion (520) extending from an upper portion of the proximal member toward a lower portion of the proximal member (500).

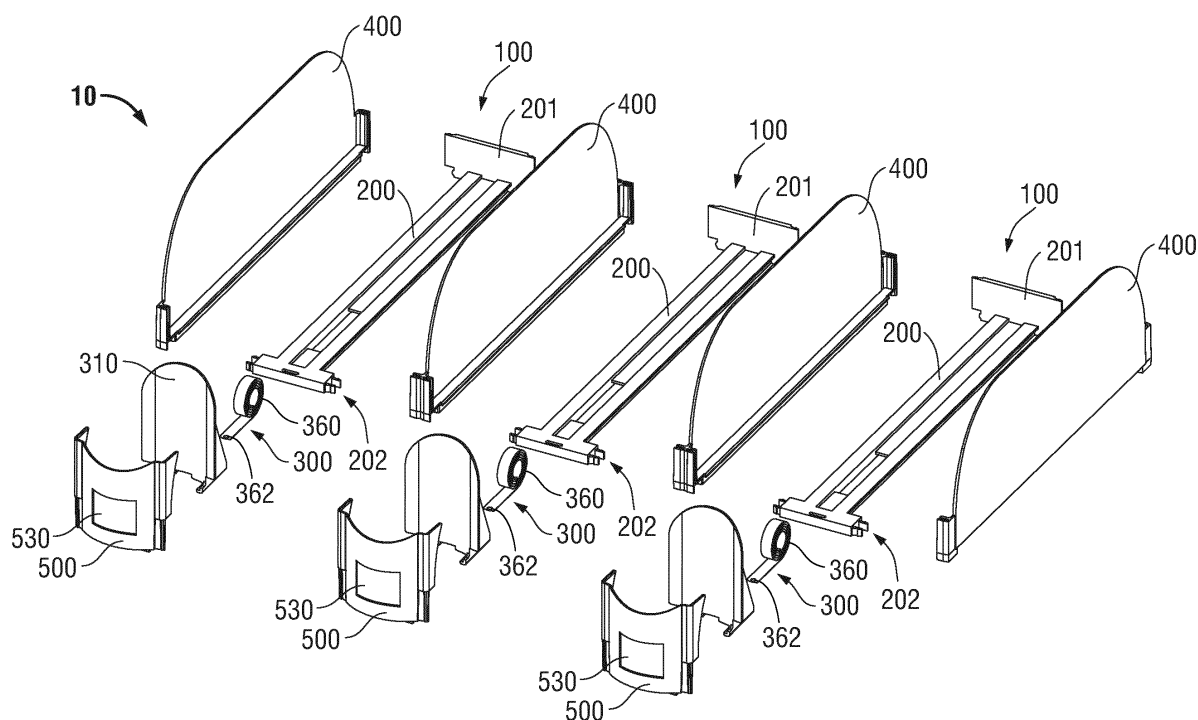


FIG. 6

Description

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] The present application claims the benefit of, and priority to, U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 14/058,796 filed on October 21, 2013, the entire contents of which being incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to a merchandising system for displaying products on a shelf. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to a merchandising system and method for storing and/or displaying products to provide for the space-efficient presentation of groups of products within a given or fixed display area, and/or allowing for convenient and orderly presentation, dispensing, stocking, and storage of products.

[0003] Various types of product merchandisers are commonly used in retail environments to display different types of products. As opposed to simply positioning products on shelves, product displays are commonly used to position products on a shelf in manner which automatically advances (e.g., via gravity or a pusher) a trailing or distal product (i.e., a product that is behind a lead or proximal-most product) closer to a consumer once the lead product has been removed from the shelf. As can be appreciated, such product displays facilitate the arrangement and upkeep of products, as the trailing products do not have to be manually moved toward the front of the shelf, for instance.

SUMMARY

[0004] The present disclosure relates to a merchandising system for displaying a plurality of products. The system includes a base and a proximal member. The base includes a product-supporting surface which defines a longitudinal axis. The proximal member is disposed in mechanical cooperation with a proximal portion of the base. The proximal member includes an arcuate portion extending between a first lateral side and a second lateral side of the proximal member. The proximal member includes a scalloped portion extending from an upper portion of the proximal member toward a lower portion of the proximal member.

In disclosed embodiments, the merchandising system further includes a pusher assembly disposed in mechanical cooperation with the base. The pusher assembly is configured to urge products on the base toward the proximal portion of the base.

[0005] In disclosed embodiments, the proximal member further includes a cutout extending therethrough. The cutout is fully enclosed by the remainder of the proximal member. Here, it is disclosed that the cutout is between about 30% and about 70% of the size of the entire prox-

imal member. It is further disclosed that a height of a center of the cutout, as measured from the product-supporting surface of the base is between about 0.5 inches and about 3.5 inches.

5 In disclosed embodiments, the arcuate portion of the proximal member defines a radius of curvature of between about 2 inches and about 4 inches.

[0006] In disclosed embodiments, a height of a bottom of the scalloped portion as measured from the product-supporting surface of the base is between about 1.5 inches and about 6 inches.

In disclosed embodiments, the merchandising system further includes a plurality of products positioned on the base. Each product has a height of between about 3 inches and about 9 inches, and wherein each product has a center of gravity of between about 1.5 inches and about 5 inches. Here, it is disclosed that the center of gravity of the product is lower than a midpoint of the height of the product.

10 The present disclosure also relates to a method of stocking a merchandising system. The method comprises providing a merchandising system including a base and a proximal member disposed in mechanical cooperation with a proximal portion of the base. The proximal member includes an arcuate portion extending between a first lateral side and a second lateral side of the proximal member, a scalloped portion extending from an upper portion of the proximal member toward a lower portion of the proximal member, and a cutout extending through the proximal member. The method also includes positioning a first product in contact with the proximal member, contacting the first product through the cutout in the proximal member, pushing the first product distally along a portion of the base, and inserting a second product proximally of the first product.

15 In disclosed embodiments, the method further comprises urging the products on the base toward the proximal portion of the base with a pusher assembly.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0007] Embodiments of the present disclosure are described hereinbelow with reference to the drawings wherein:

45 FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a merchandising system for displaying items on a shelf according to embodiments of the present disclosure, the merchandising system is illustrated including three guide assemblies with each guide assembly including one product thereon;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the merchandising system of FIG. 1 including a plurality of products on each guide assembly;

50 FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the merchandising system of FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrated with no products thereon;

FIG. 4 is a top view of the merchandising system of

the present disclosure including three guide assemblies;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a single guide assembly of the merchandising system of the present disclosure;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view with parts separated of the merchandising system of the present disclosure including three guide assemblies;

FIG. 7 is a side view of one guide assembly of the merchandising system of the present disclosure;

FIG. 8 is a rear, perspective view of one guide assembly of the merchandising system of the present disclosure, wherein one lateral guide is omitted for clarity;

FIGS. 9-11 are various views of a proximal member of a guide assembly of the merchandising system of the present disclosure;

FIGS. 12-14 are various views of a pusher member of a guide assembly of the merchandising system of the present disclosure; and

FIG. 15 is a rear-looking cut-away view of a guide assembly of the merchandising system of the present disclosure.

DESCRIPTION

[0008] Embodiments of the presently disclosed merchandising system are described in detail with reference to the drawings wherein like numerals designate identical or corresponding elements in each of the several views. As is common in the art, the term "proximal" refers to that part or component closer to the user, e.g., customer, while the term "distal" refers to that part or component farther away from the user.

[0009] Generally, with particular reference to FIGS. 1-3, a merchandising system 10 is disclosed that includes a plurality of guide assemblies 100. In the illustrated embodiments, each guide assembly 100 includes a base 200, a pusher assembly 300, two lateral guides 400 (or shared lateral guides 400 with an adjacent guide assembly 100), and a proximal member 500. While the illustrated embodiments show each guide assembly 100 configured for merchandising one row of products "P," it is envisioned and within the scope of the present disclosure that each guide assembly 100 is configured for merchandising more than one row of products.

[0010] One merchandising system 10 includes a plurality of guide assemblies 100. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1-4 and 6, merchandising system 10 includes three guide assemblies 100. In disclosed embodiments, merchandising system 10 includes any number of guide assemblies 100. As can be appreciated, several merchandising systems 10 are able to be positioned adjacent one another on a shelf.

[0011] The base 200, which is designed to be placed on a horizontal or inclined store shelf (or to be secured to a gondola), is configured to support a plurality of products "P" thereon. In the illustrated embodiments, base

200 is shown with a particular type of product "P" having packaging that includes a pouch (e.g., salad dressing, beverages, soups, condiments, packaged meat, etc.). Generally, the center of gravity of such products are significantly below the midpoint of the height, thus making the products bottom-heavy. For example, it is envisioned that the products "P" illustrated herein have a height "hP" of between about 4 inches and about 12 inches (e.g., approximately 10 inches), and have a center of gravity "cgP" of between about 1.5 inches and about 6 inches (e.g., approximately 3.5 inches) from its bottom surface (see FIG. 2). However, while a certain type of product is shown, merchandising system 10 can be used to support other types of products.

[0012] The pusher assembly 300 is configured to urge product(s) "P" on the base 200 toward proximal member 500. The lateral guides 400 are disposed in mechanical cooperation with base 200 (e.g., are integrally formed therewith, connectable thereto, etc.) and help maintain the products "P" on the base 200. A distal wall 201 extends upward from base 200 and is also configured to help maintain the products "P" on the base 200. The proximal member 500 is disposed in mechanical cooperation (e.g., via a snap-fit connection) with a proximal portion 202 of base 200 and is configured to resist the proximal force enacted by pusher assembly 300 and to help maintain the products "P" on the base 200.

[0013] With reference to FIG. 8, the base 200 includes a product-supporting surface 210 and a track 250. The product-supporting surface 210 defines a longitudinal axis A-A and is configured to support products thereon. The track 250 extends at least partially along product-supporting surface 210 and is configured to guide a pusher member 310 of pusher assembly 300.

[0014] With reference to FIGS. 6, 8 and 12-14, the pusher assembly 300 includes pusher member 310 and a biasing member 360 (e.g., a coiled spring). Pusher assembly 300 is configured to bias products "P" on base 200 in a proximal direction. With particular reference to FIGS. 12-14, pusher member 310 includes a base member 320 and a substantially vertical member 330. In the illustrated embodiment, the vertical member 330 has an arcuate shape as viewed from above (e.g., to correspond to the contour of a distal face of the product "P" positioned thereagainst), but it is envisioned that vertical member 330 includes a planar shape or another type of shape. In the illustrated embodiment, an upper portion 312 of vertical member 330 also includes an arcuate shape, but it is envisioned that upper portion 312 includes a planar shape or another type of shape.

[0015] Base member 320 includes rails 322 positioned on each lateral side which are configured to engage track 250 of base 200 (see FIG. 8). Base member 320 also includes a slot 324 which is configured to allow a portion of biasing member 360 to pass through and/or be secured to. A proximal portion 362 of biasing member 360 is disposed in mechanical cooperation with a proximal portion of base 200 and/or with proximal member 500 (see FIG.

6). Pusher member 310 is configured to longitudinally slide with respect to the product-supporting surface 210 of the base 200. A coiled portion of biasing member 360 is positioned in mechanical cooperation with base member 320 and distally of vertical member 330 (see FIG. 8, for example).

[0016] Referring now to FIGS. 4-10, further details of proximal member 500 are shown. Proximal member 500 includes a contoured surface 510 (when viewed from the top; see FIGS. 4 and 11), and a scalloped portion 520 (when viewed from the front; see FIGS. 5 and 9). Contoured surface 510 is curved with respect to an axis B-B (FIG. 11) that is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis A-A, and extends between a first lateral side 512 and a second lateral side 514 of proximal member 500. Contoured surface 510 is designed to mimic or substantially mimic the curvature of the product "P" that is positioned thereagainst. Additionally, contoured surface 510 is configured to reduce the possibility of products "P" folding over proximal member 500 as a result of the biasing force acting thereagainst and being provided by pusher assembly 300. It is envisioned that the radius of curvature of contoured surface 510 is between about 2 inches and about 4 inches, and is approximately equal to 2.75 inches.

[0017] Scalloped portion 520 extends from an upper portion 522 of proximal member 500 toward a lower portion 524 of proximal member 500, such that a lower-most portion 526 of scalloped portion 520 is between first lateral side 512 and second lateral side 514 of proximal member 500 (see FIGS. 7 and 9). Scalloped portion 520 is configured to increase visibility of a lead product "P" and to further reduce the possibility of products "P" folding over proximal member 500. That is, by lowering the height of an upper edge 502 of proximal member 500, upper edge 502 is closer to the center of gravity of product "P," such that the upper and lighter portion of the product "P" is less likely to become folded over upper edge 502 of proximal member 500 due to the pressure exerted by pusher assembly 300, for example. It is envisioned that a height of upper edge 502 (i.e., at lower-most portion 526 of scalloped portion 520) is aligned or substantially aligned with the height of the center of gravity of the product "P." It is further envisioned that the height "hsp" of the bottom of scalloped portion 520 as measured from product-supporting surface 210 of base 200 is between about 1.5 inches and about 6 inches, and is approximately equal to 3.5 inches.

[0018] As shown in the illustrated embodiment, proximal member 500 also includes a cutout 530 extending therethrough. Cutout 530 is configured to facilitate stocking or restocking products "P" onto guide assembly 100. That is, a user (e.g., store clerk) is able to force the products "P" on base 200 distally by placing his or her hand or a tool through cutout 530 and pushing the products "P." More particularly, due to the nature of the packaging of product "P" (e.g., substantially similar to the illustrated package), the product "P" may tend to fall over or slump

when its upper portion is pushed rearwardly, especially in the circumstances where pusher assembly 300 (and/or a gravity-fed guide assembly 100) is urging the products "P" proximally. When existing products "P" are pushed distally through cutout 530, the product "P" tends to remain upright, thus facilitating placement of other products "P" (i.e., proximally of existing products "P").

[0019] While cutout 530 is illustrated as having a particular size and shape, it is envisioned that cutout 530 is any reasonable size and any regular or irregular shape. For example, it is envisioned that cutout 530 is between about 30% and about 70%, e.g., about 50%, of the size of the entire proximal member 500. It is further envisioned that a vertical center of cutout 530 is aligned with, substantially aligned with, or below the vertical center of gravity of the product "P" designed to be positioned on base 200. Here, the vertical center of cutout 530 (i.e., distance from product-supporting surface 210) is between about 2 inches and about 4 inches, and is approximately equal to 2.75 inches (see FIG. 7).

[0020] It is further envisioned that at least a portion of proximal member 500 is transparent or translucent to allow a consumer to view a portion of the proximal-most product "P" on the merchandising system 10 there-through.

[0021] The present disclosure also includes a method of displaying items or products, and a method of stocking or restocking products using the merchandising system 10 described above. The present disclosure also includes a system including the merchandising system 10 described above along with particular products, such as those described above.

[0022] While several embodiments of the disclosure have been shown in the figures, it is not intended that the disclosure be limited thereto, as it is intended that the disclosure be as broad in scope as the art will allow and that the specification be read likewise. Therefore, the above description should not be construed as limiting, but merely as exemplifications of various embodiments. Those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope and spirit of the claims appended hereto.

Claims

1. A merchandising system for a displaying a plurality of products, the system comprising:

a base including a product-supporting surface, the product-supporting surface of the base defining a longitudinal axis; and
a proximal member disposed in mechanical cooperation with a proximal portion of the base, the proximal member including an arcuate portion extending between a first lateral side and a second lateral side of the proximal member, and a scalloped portion extending from an upper portion of the proximal member toward a lower portion

tion of the proximal member.

2. The merchandising system of Claim 1, further including a pusher assembly, the pusher assembly including a pusher member disposed in mechanical cooperation with the base and being configured to urge products on the base toward the proximal portion of the base. 5
3. The merchandising system of Claim 1, wherein the proximal member further includes a cutout extending therethrough, the cutout being fully enclosed by the remainder of the proximal member. 10
4. The merchandising system of Claim 3, wherein the cutout is between about 30% and about 70% of the size of the entire proximal member. 15
5. The merchandising system of Claim 3, wherein a height of a center of the cutout as measured from the product-supporting surface of the base is between about 0.5 inches and about 2.5 inches. 20
6. The merchandising system according to any of Claims 1-3, wherein the arcuate portion of the proximal member defines a radius of curvature of between about 2 inches and about 4 inches. 25
7. The merchandising system according to any of Claims 1-3, wherein a height of a bottom of the scalloped portion as measured from the product-supporting surface of the base is between about 1.5 inches and about 6 inches. 30
8. The merchandising system according to any of Claims 1-3, further comprising a plurality of products positioned on the base, wherein each product has a height of between about 3 inches and about 9 inches, and wherein each product has a center of gravity of between about 1.5 inches and about 5 inches. 35 40
9. The merchandising system of Claim 8, wherein the center of gravity of each product is lower than a midpoint of the height of each product. 45
10. A method of stocking a merchandising system, the method comprising:

providing a merchandising system including a base and a proximal member disposed in mechanical cooperation with a proximal portion of the base, the proximal member including an arcuate portion extending between a first lateral side and a second lateral side of the proximal member, a scalloped portion extending from an upper portion of the proximal member toward a lower portion of the proximal member, and a cutout extending through the proximal member; 50 55

and

positioning a first product in contact with the proximal member;
contacting the first product through the cutout in the proximal member;
pushing the first product distally along a portion of the base; and
inserting a second product proximally of the first product.

11. The method of Claim 10, further comprising urging the products on the base toward the proximal portion of the base with a pusher assembly.

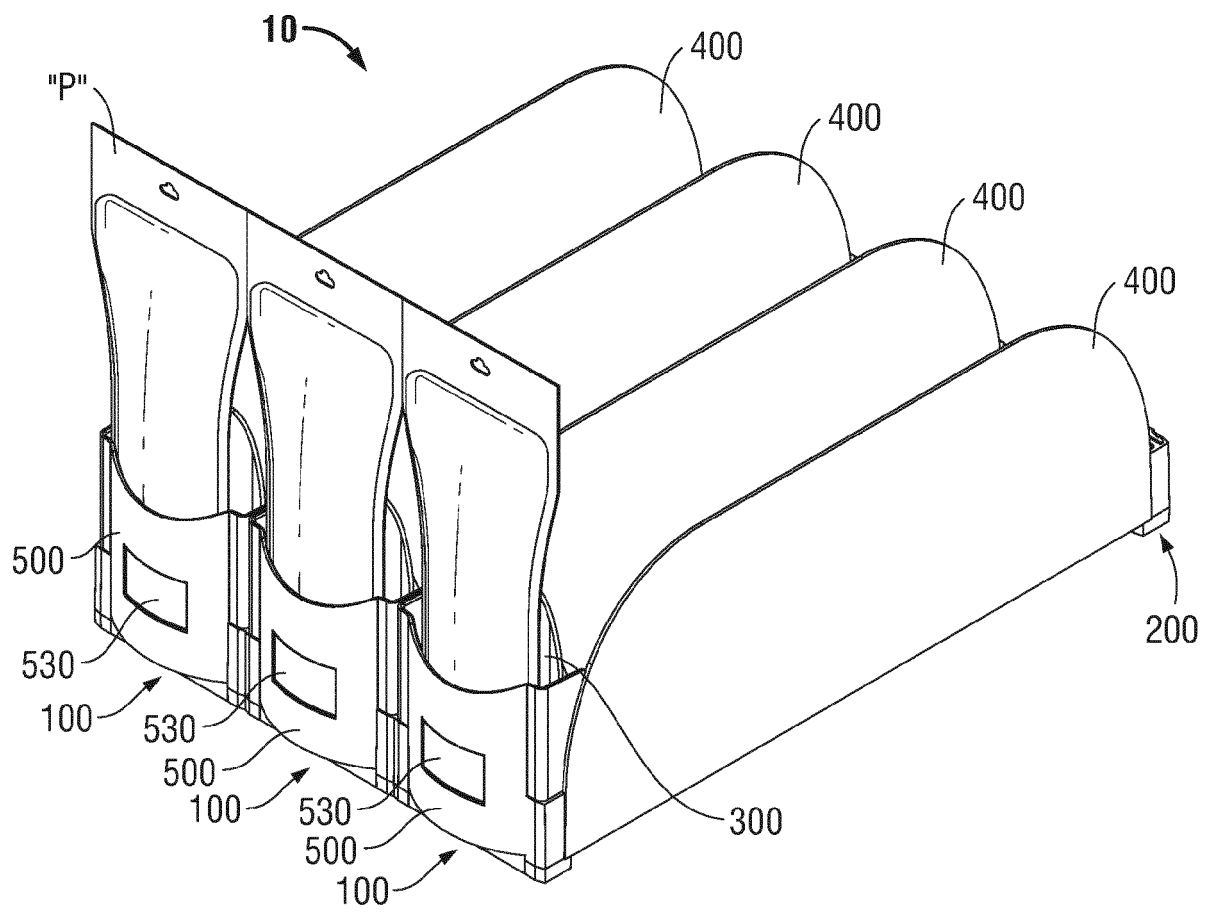


FIG. 1

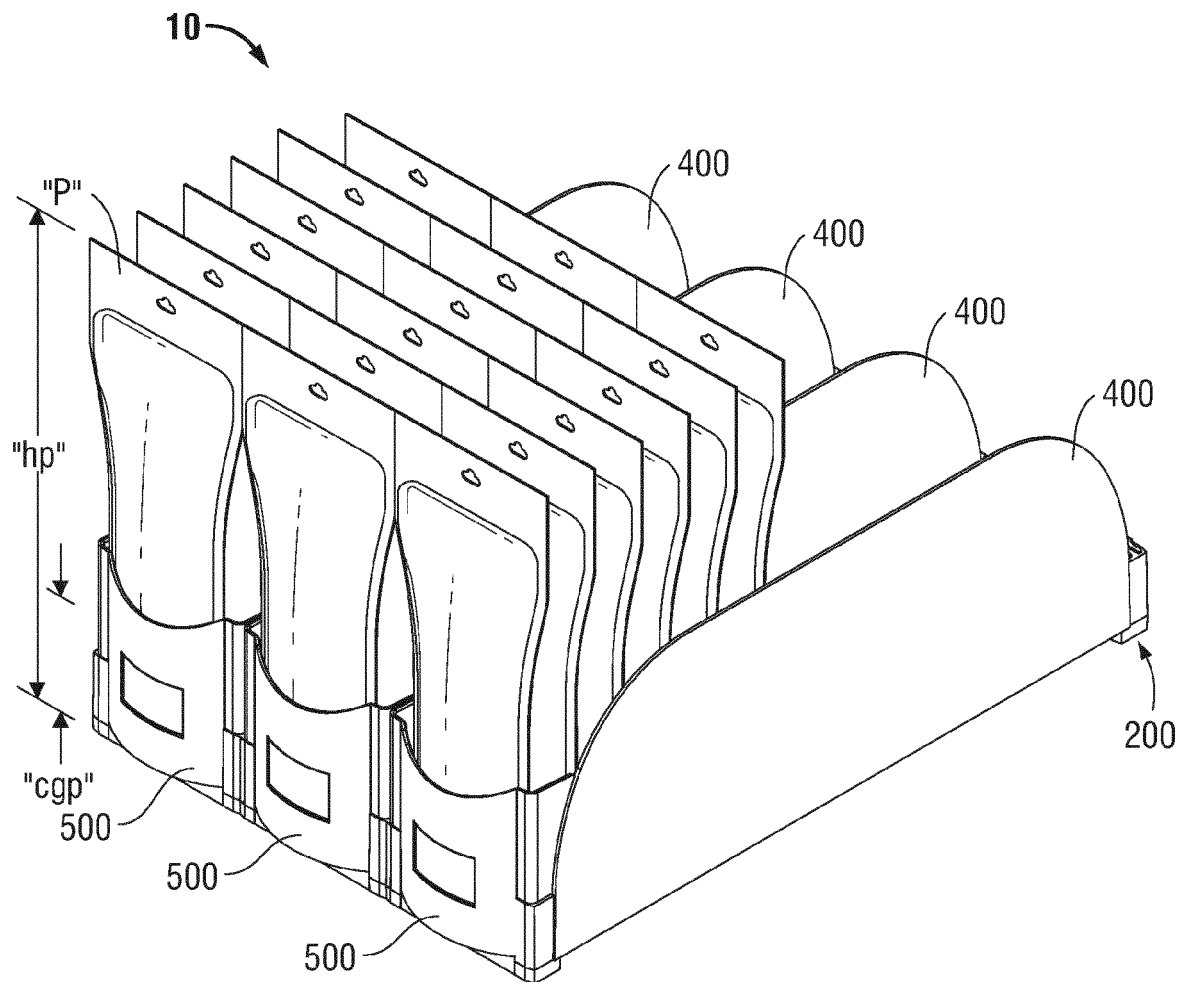


FIG. 2

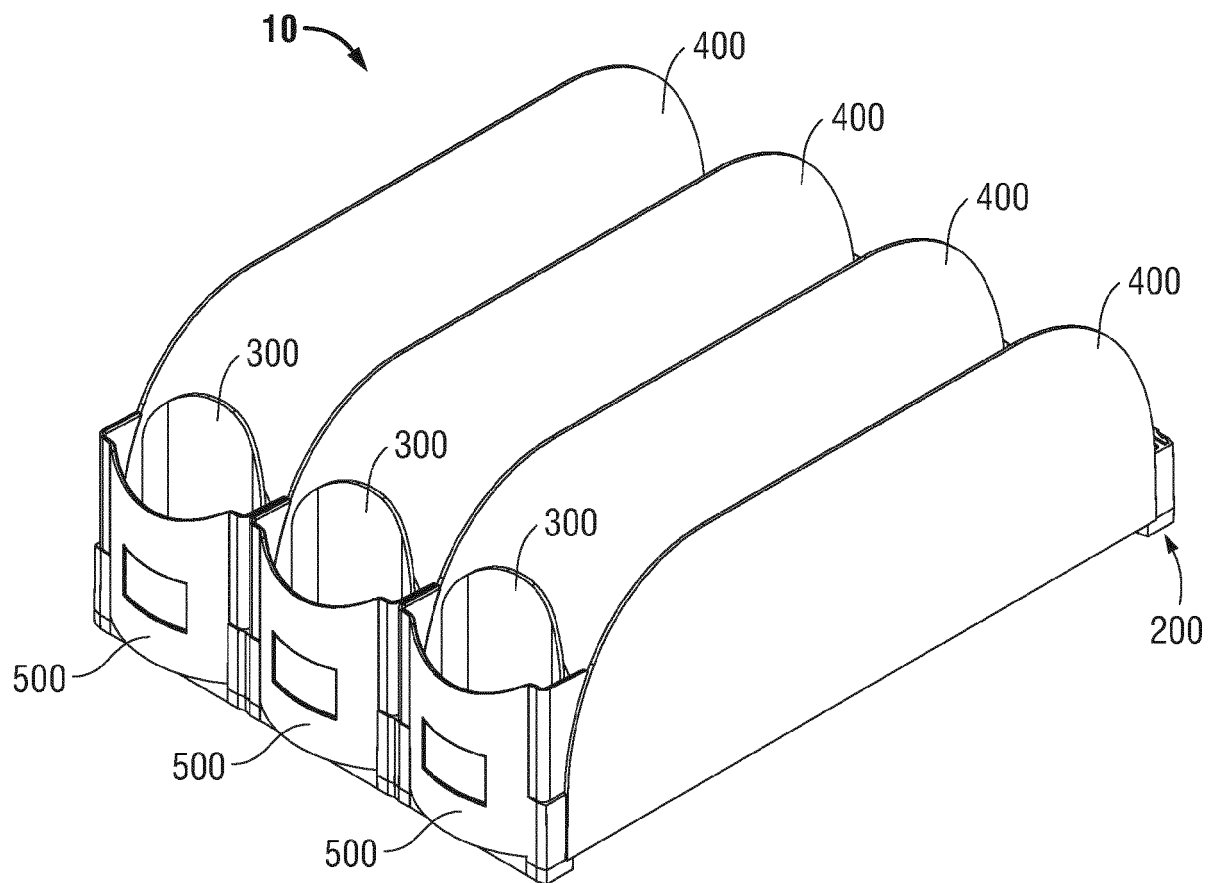


FIG. 3

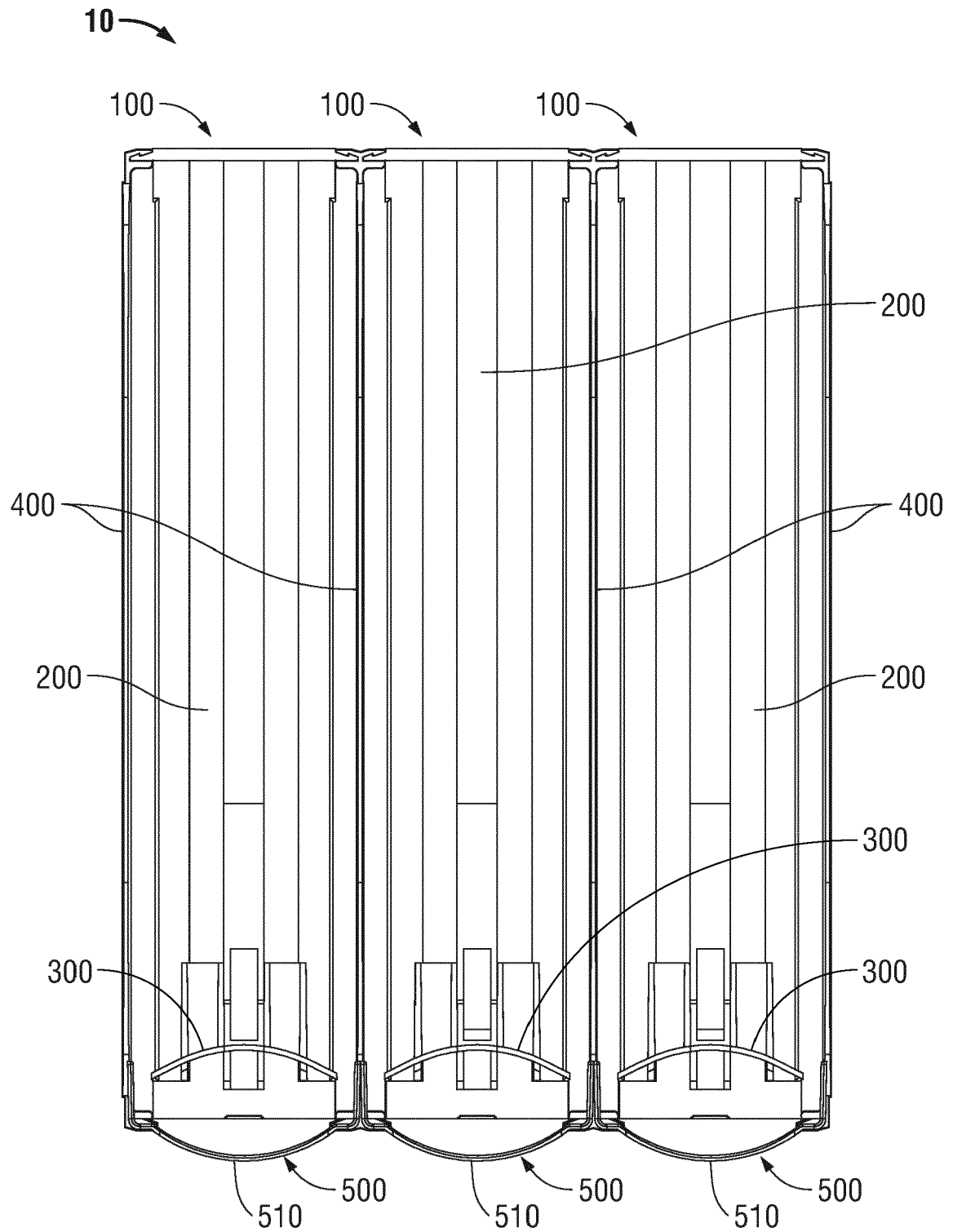


FIG. 4

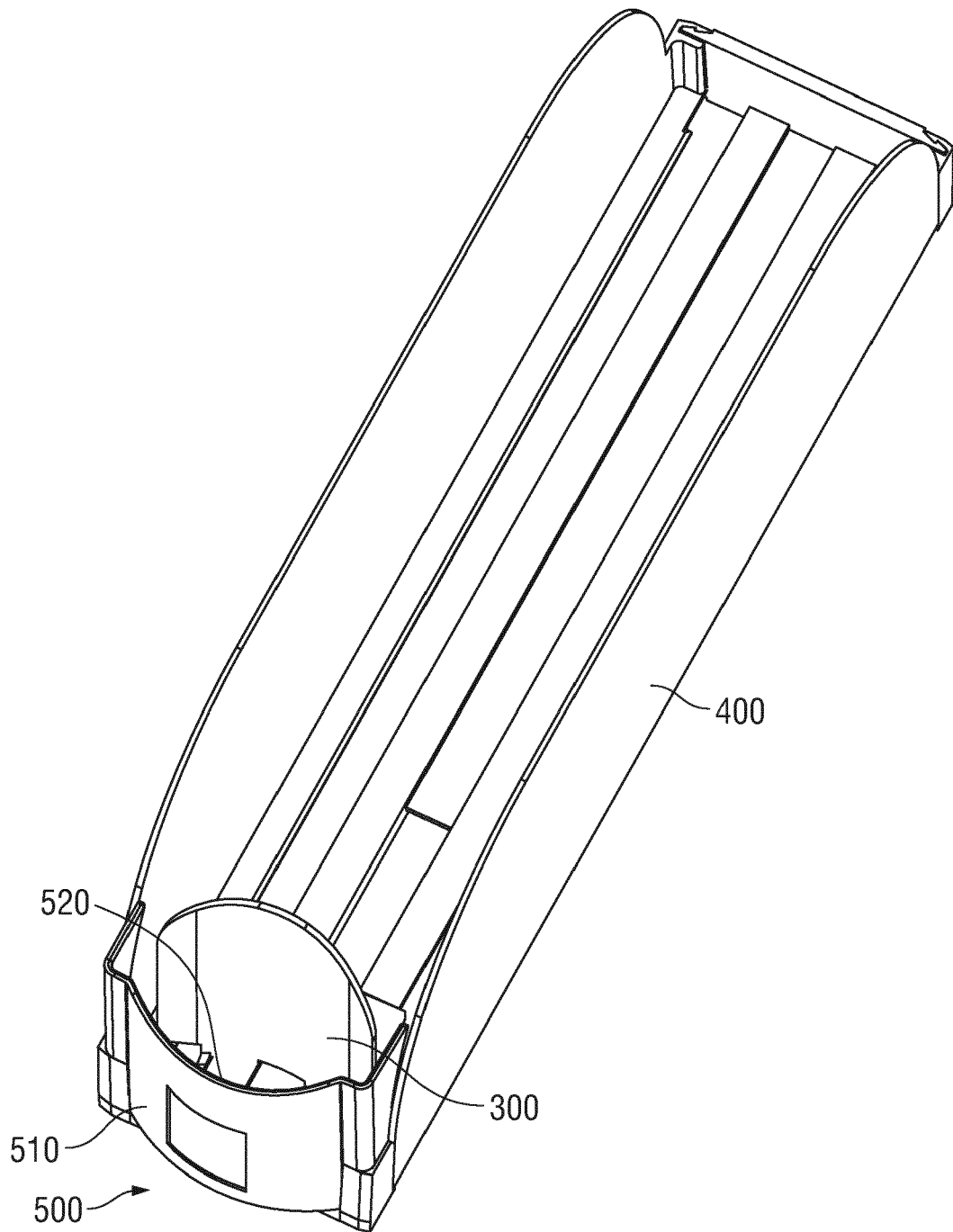


FIG. 5

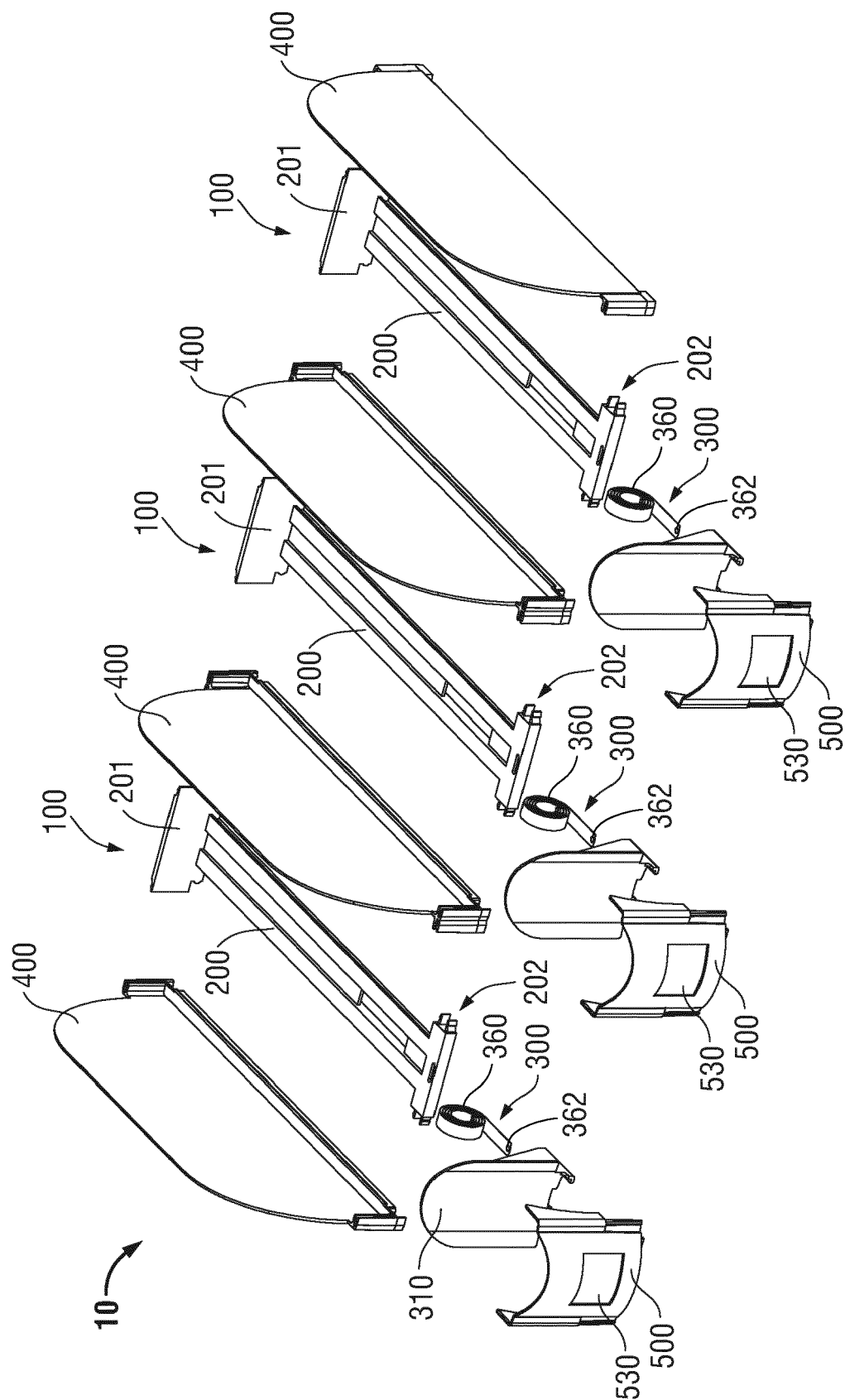


FIG. 6

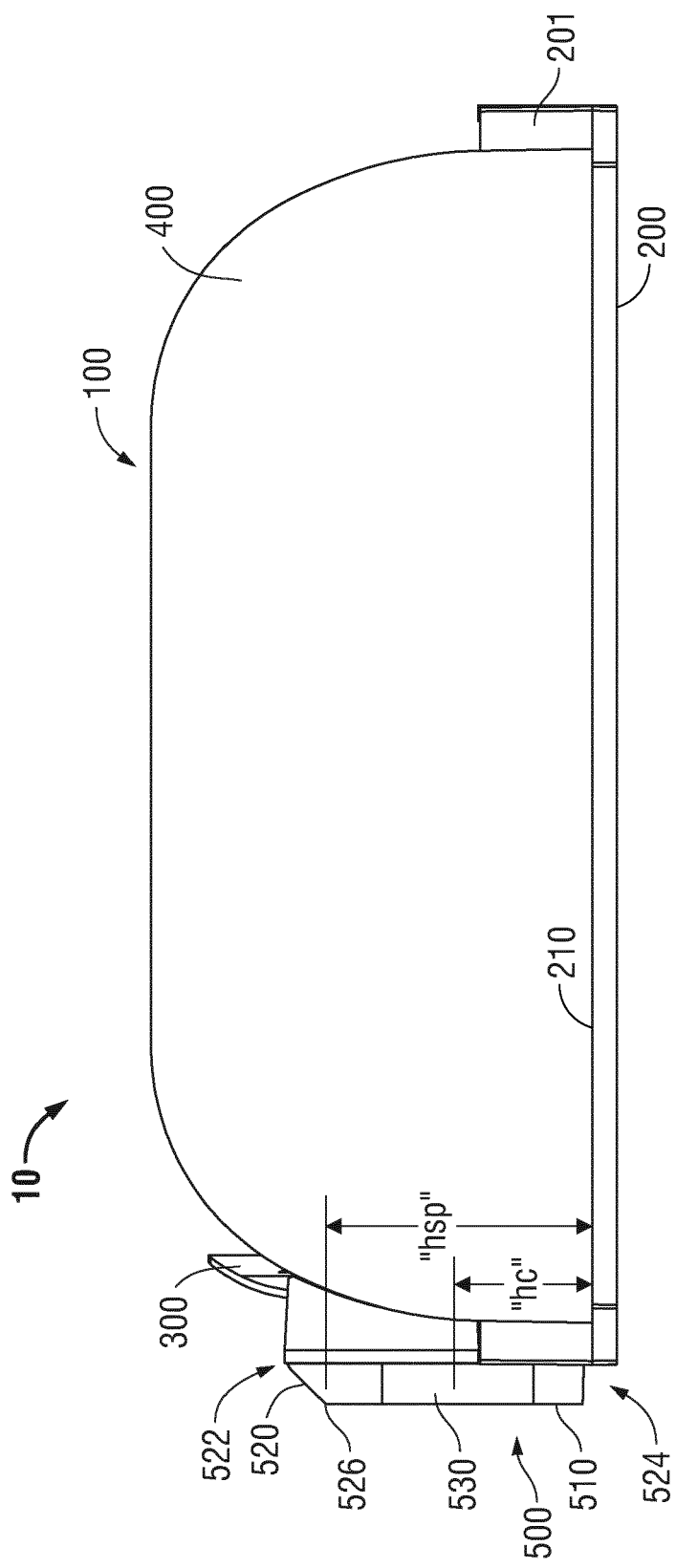


FIG. 7

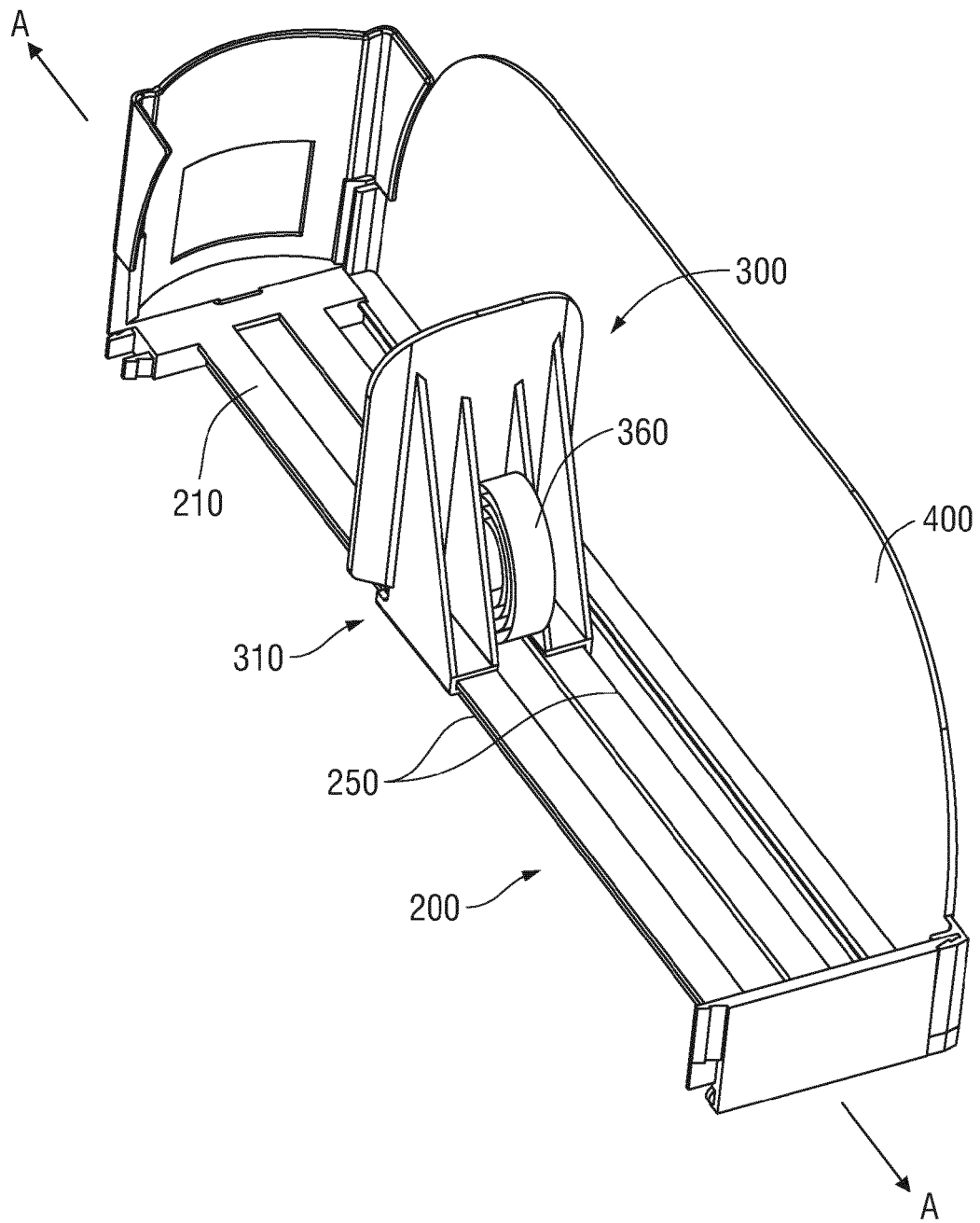


FIG. 8

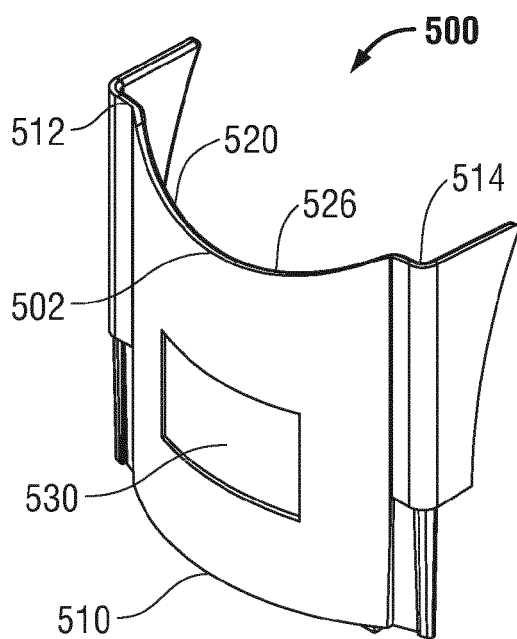


FIG. 9

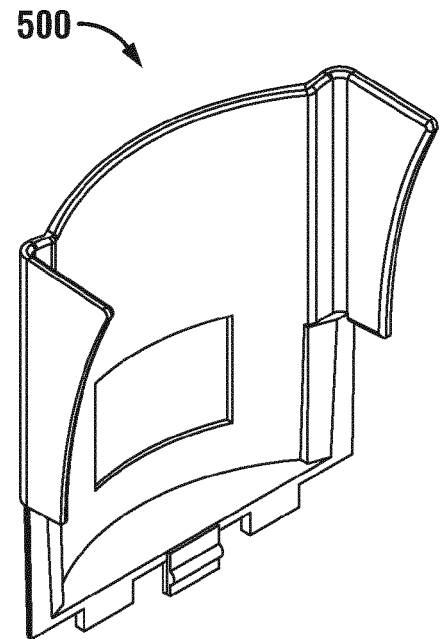


FIG. 10

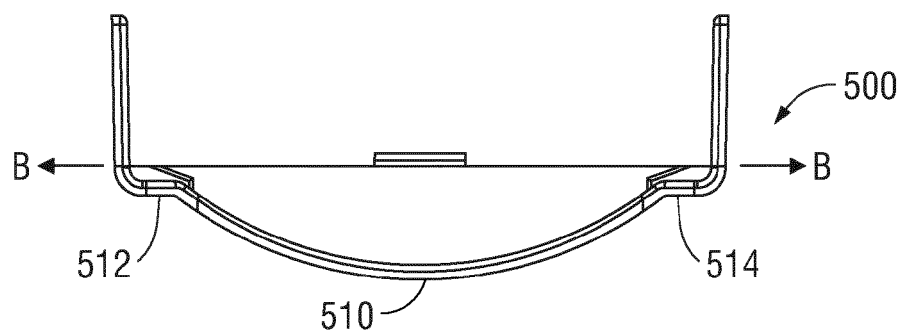


FIG. 11

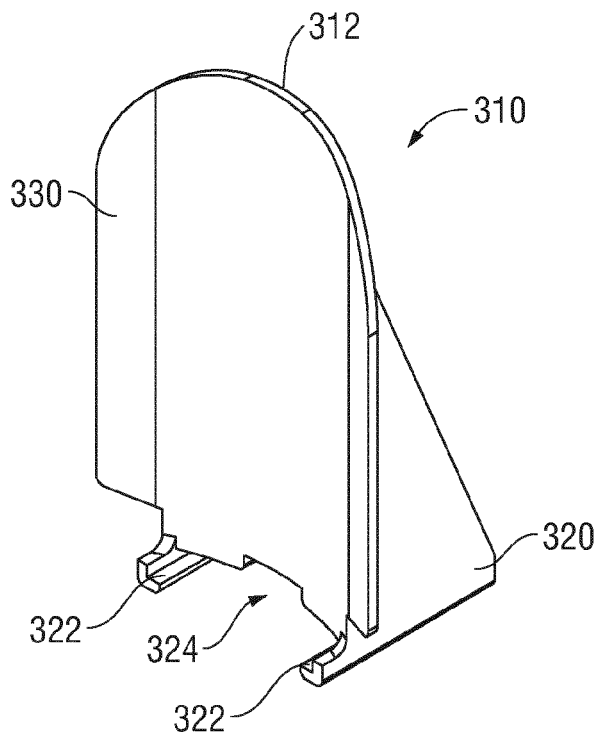


FIG. 12

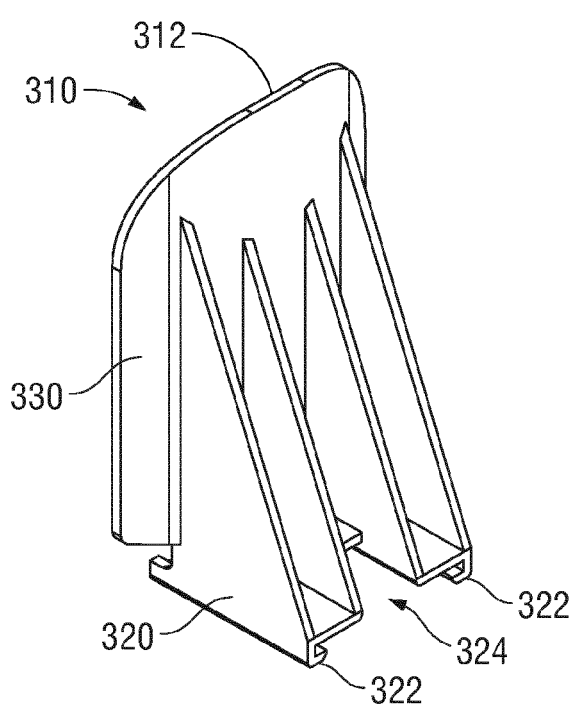


FIG. 13

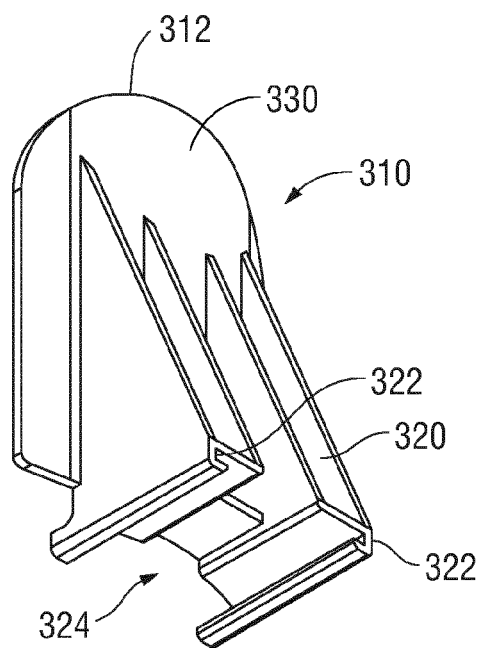


FIG. 14

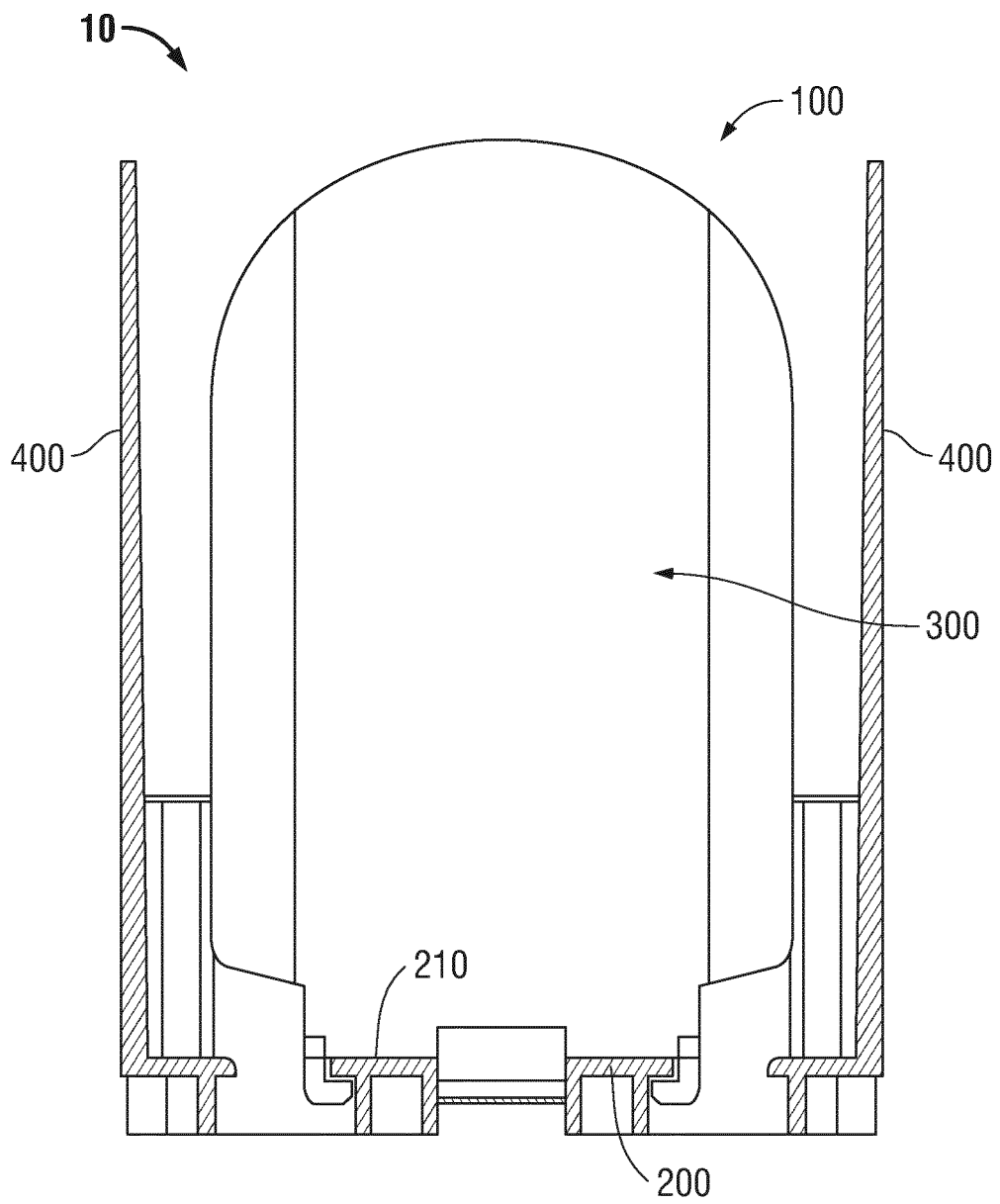


FIG. 15

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

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