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(54) **OBJECT-SECURABLE ELECTROMAGNETIC-SHIELDING APPARATUS**

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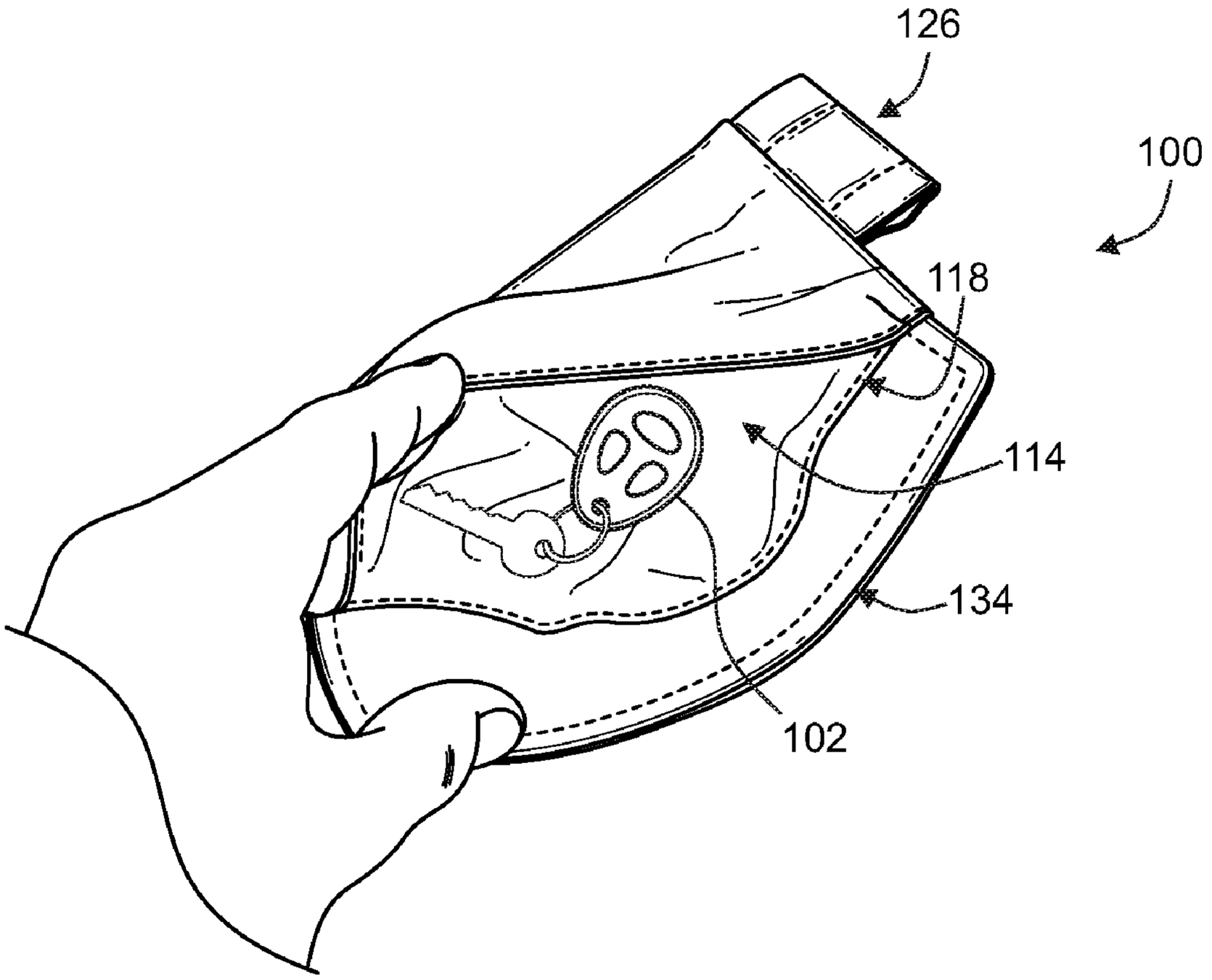
(57) **ABSTRACT**

An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus provides electromagnetic-signal isolation between electromagnetic devices such as key fobs, and an ambient environment external to the apparatus. The apparatus comprises a pouch and an object securement element, and may be flexible so as to conform to the shapes of the various objects it is secured to. The apparatus may be comprised of one or more layers of electromagnetic shielding fabric, and may have a coating to protect it and devices contained therein from contaminants, corrosive substances and abrasion within the ambient environment. A shielded cavity within the pouch is accessible via a mouth portion, which in turn may be electromagnetically shielded by way of a movable closure flap. The object securement element enables the pouch to be suspendedly securable to an object in the ambient environment, and may comprise magnets disposed within lateral securement wings flexibly attached to the pouch.



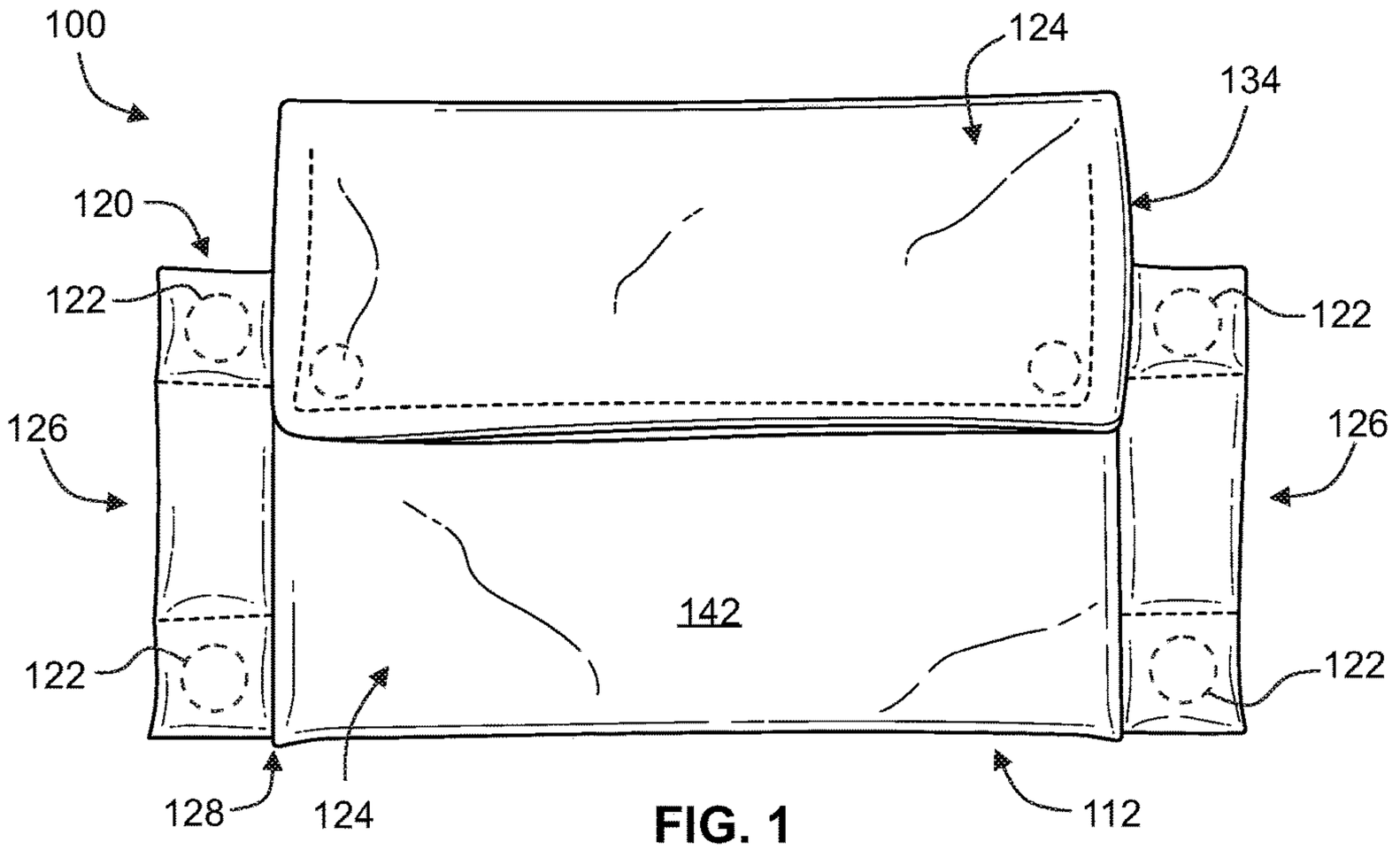

100
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FIG. 1

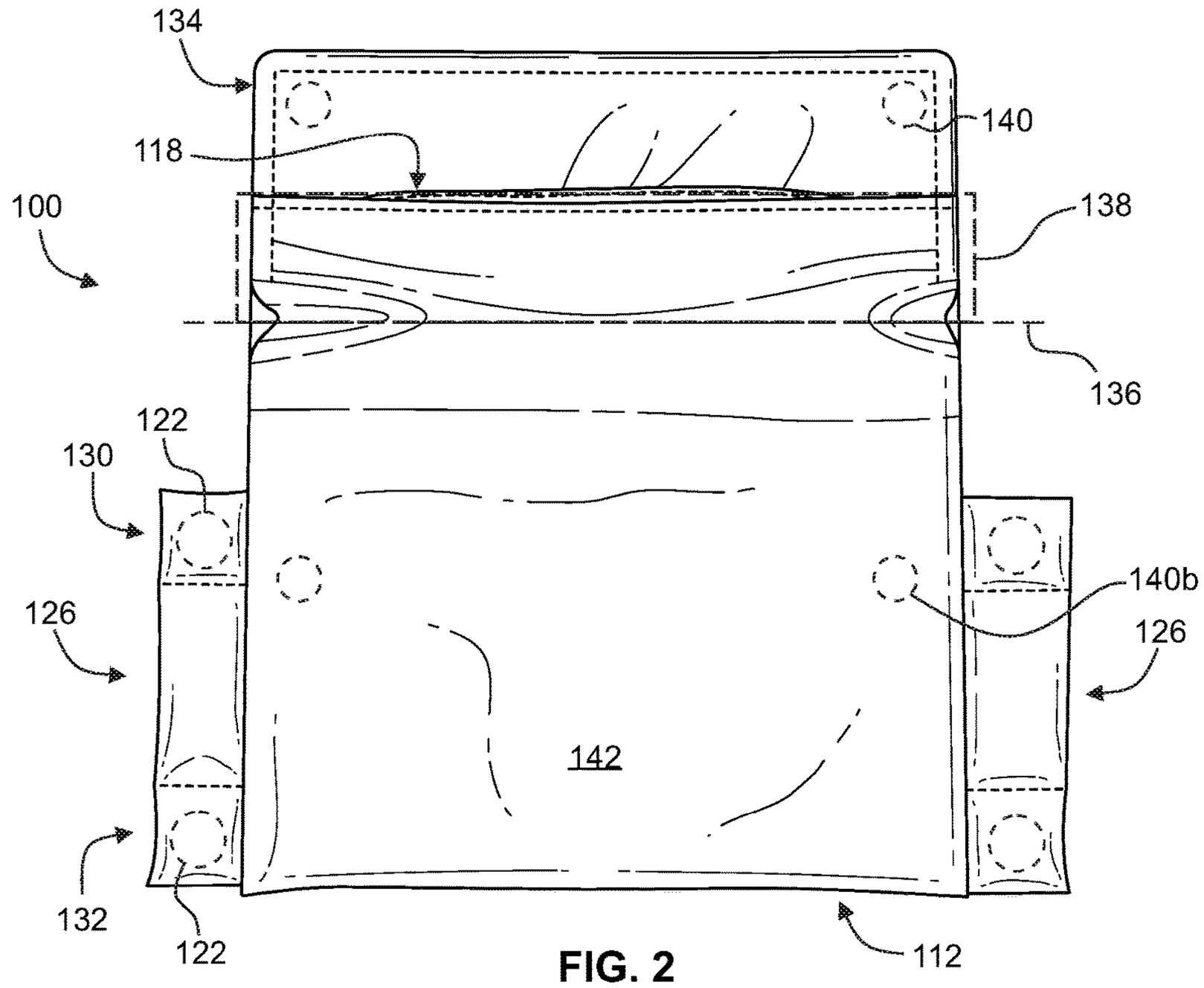
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FIG. 2

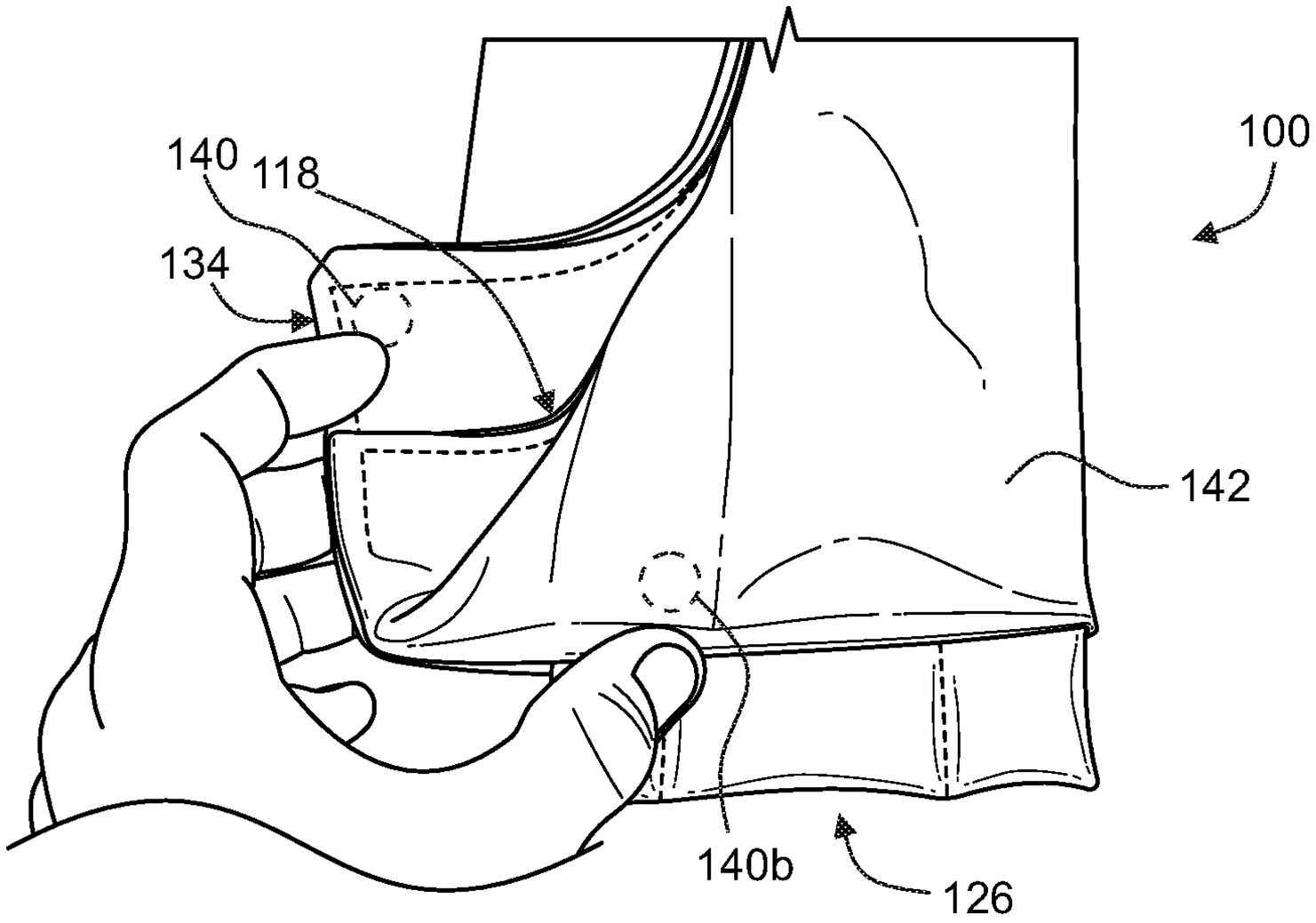

FIG. 3

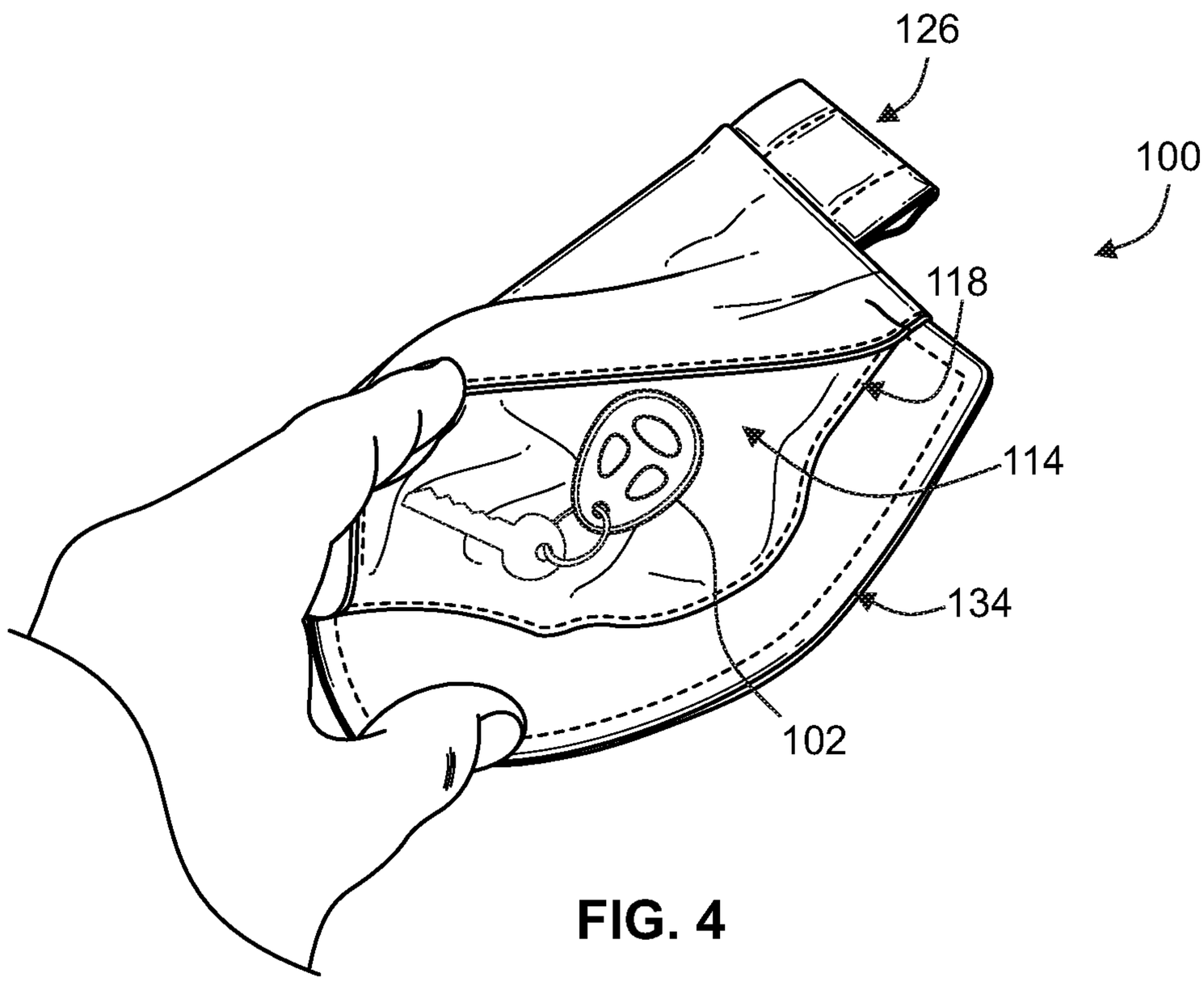

FIG. 4

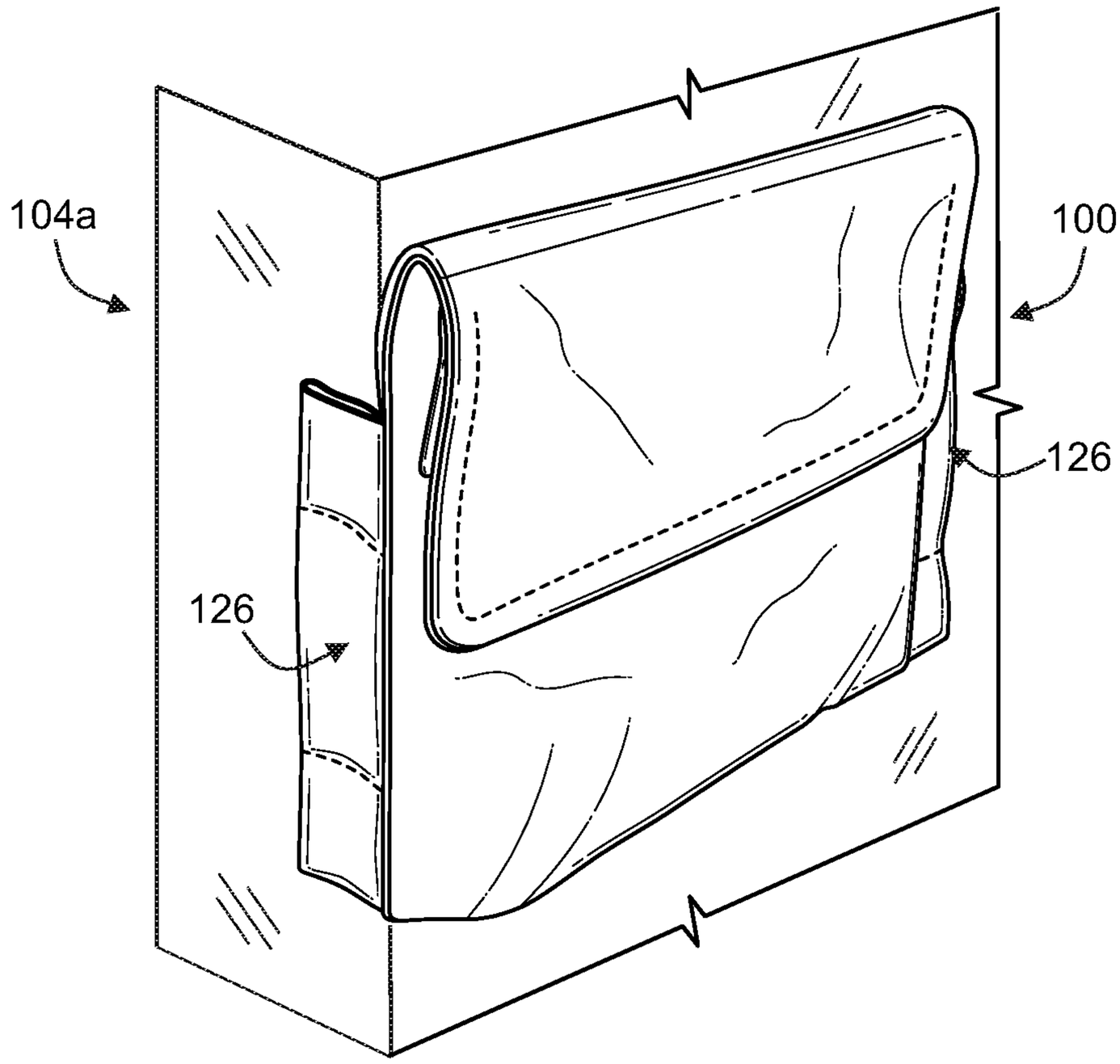

FIG. 5

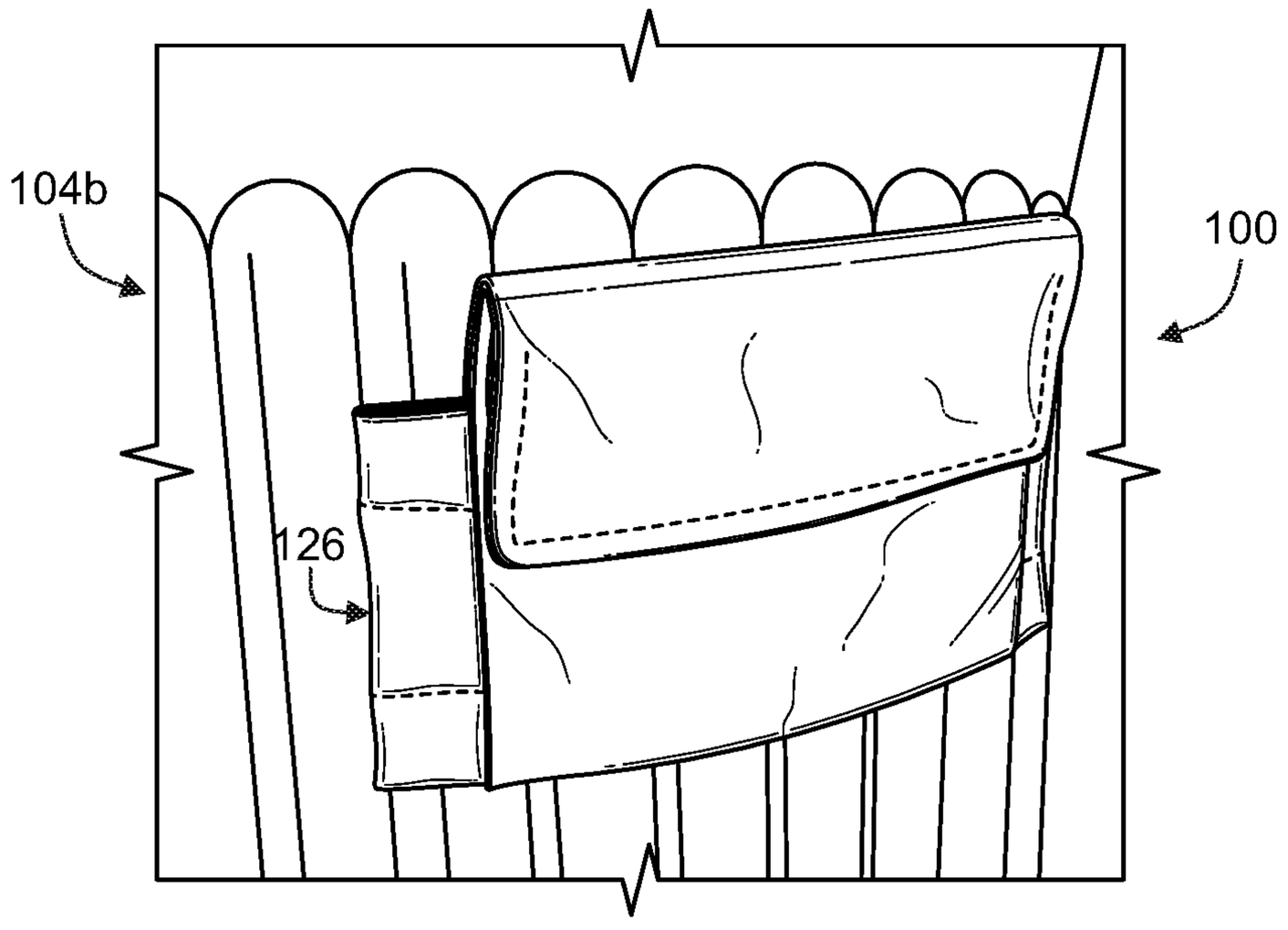

FIG. 6

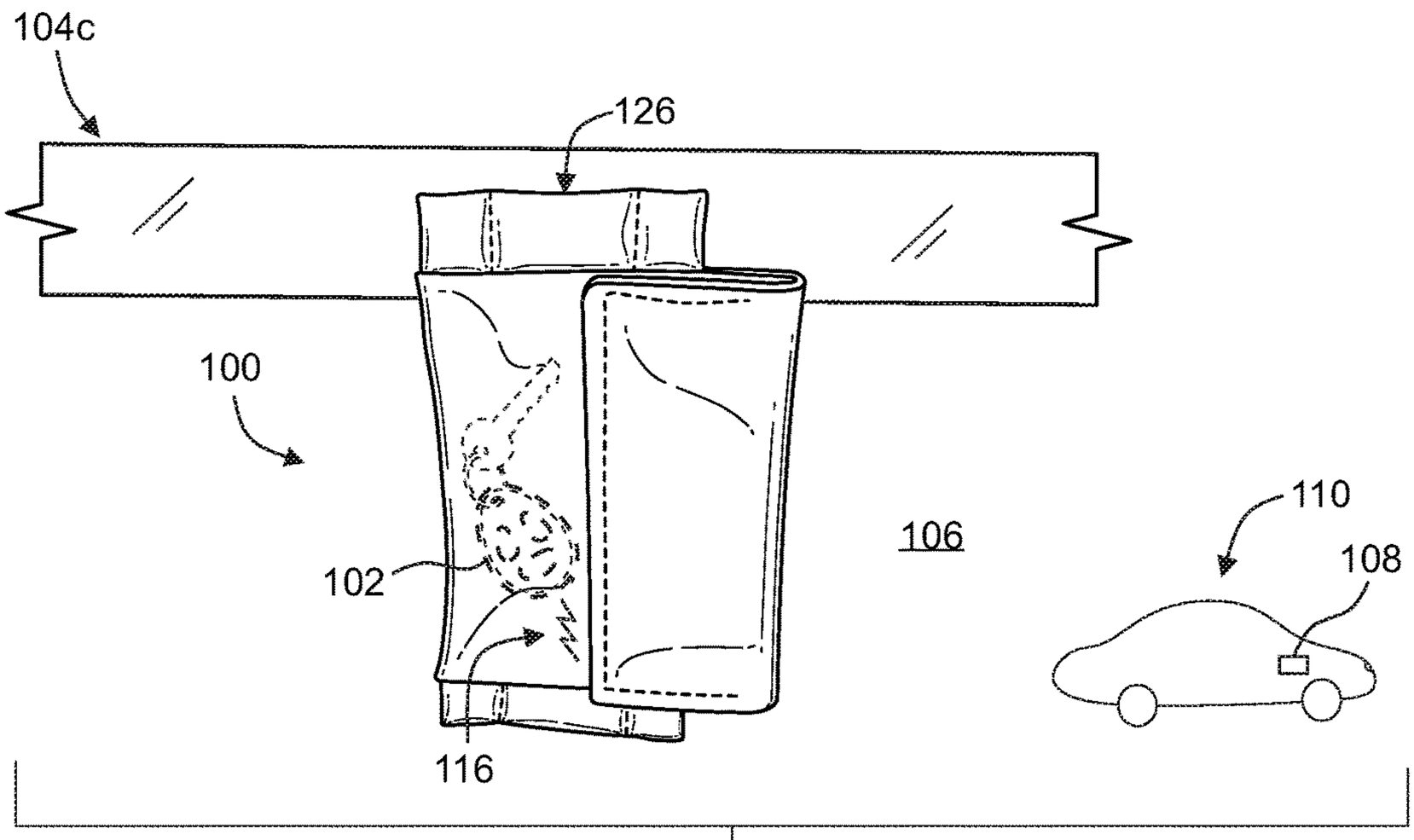

FIG. 7

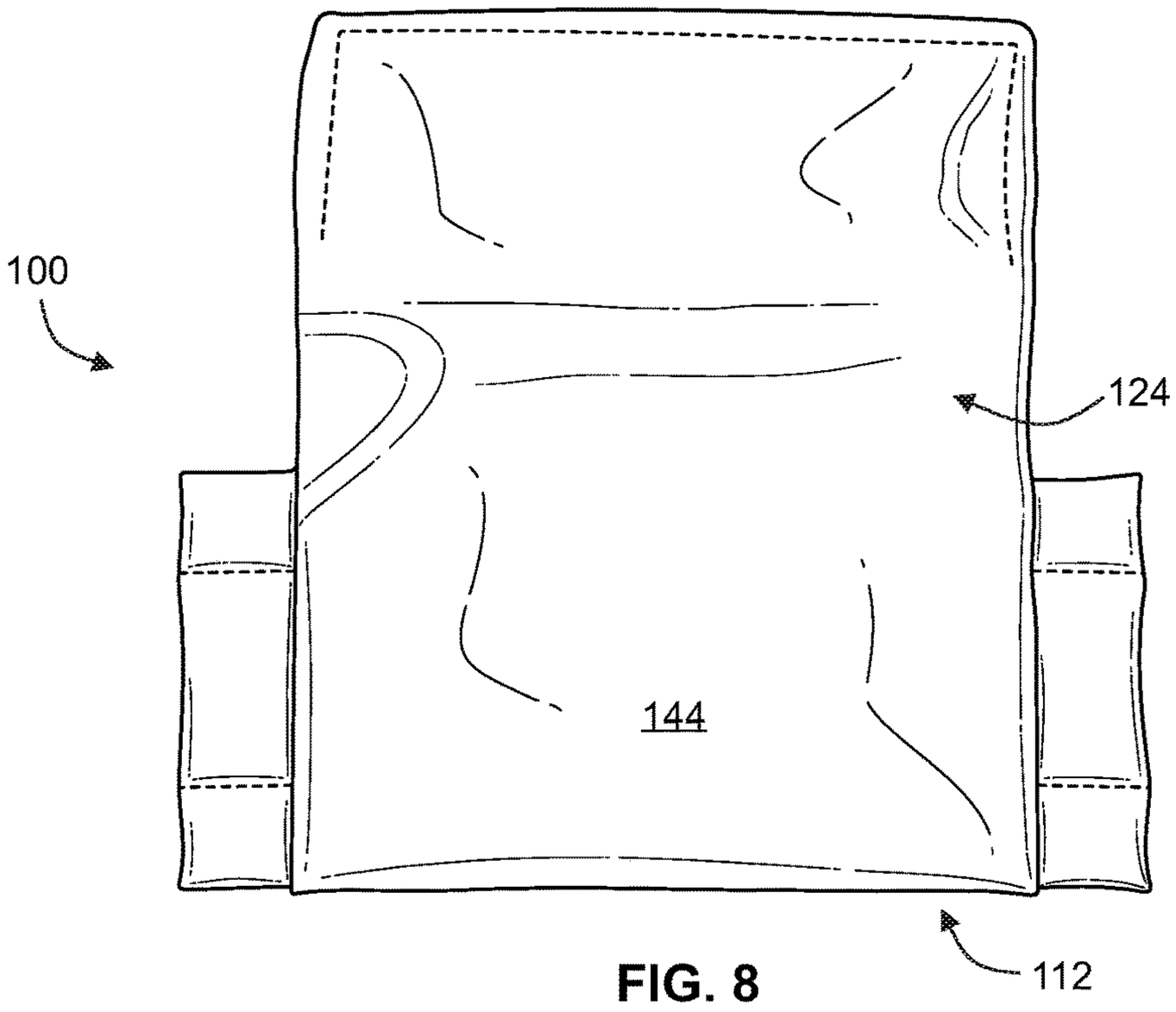

FIG. 8

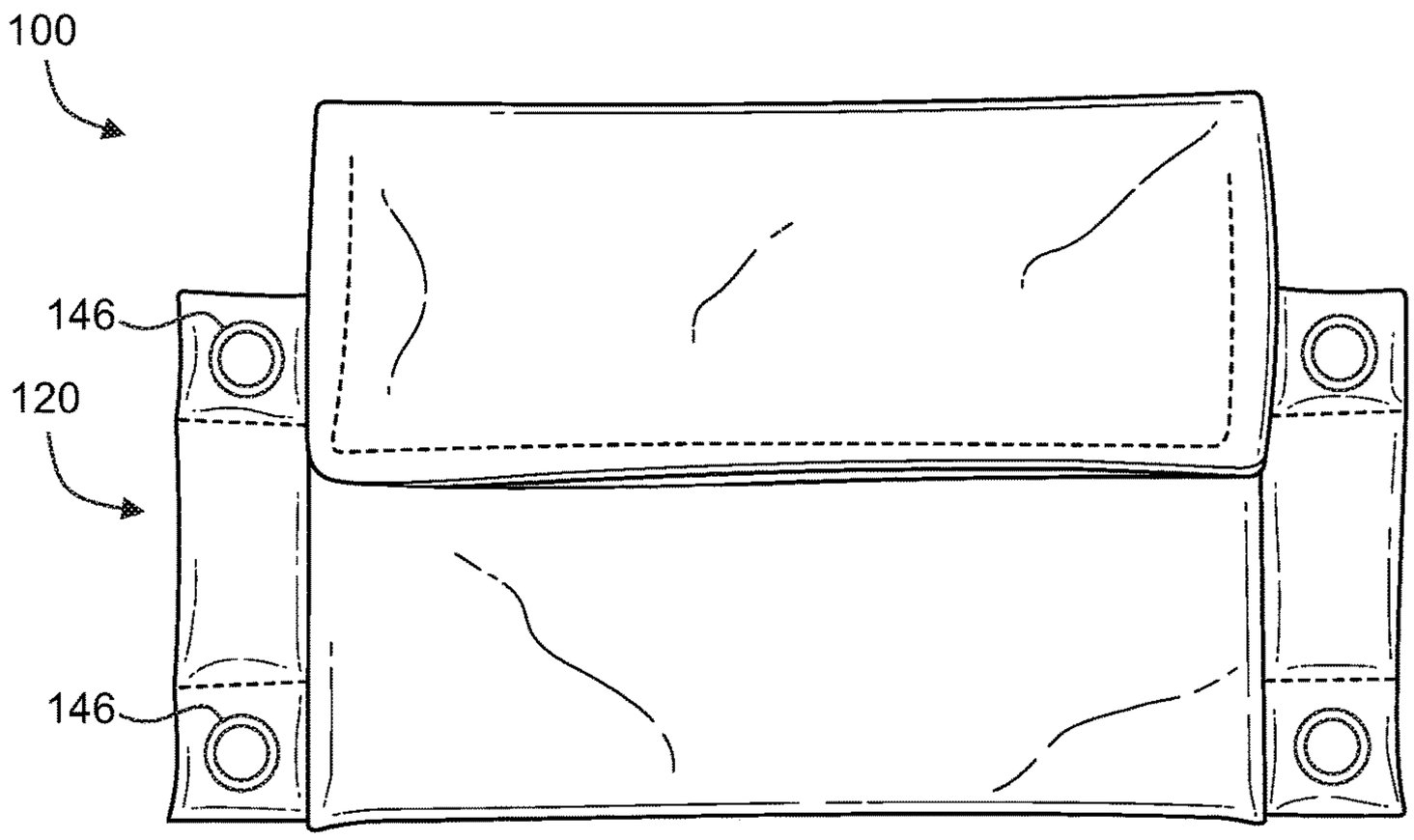

FIG. 9

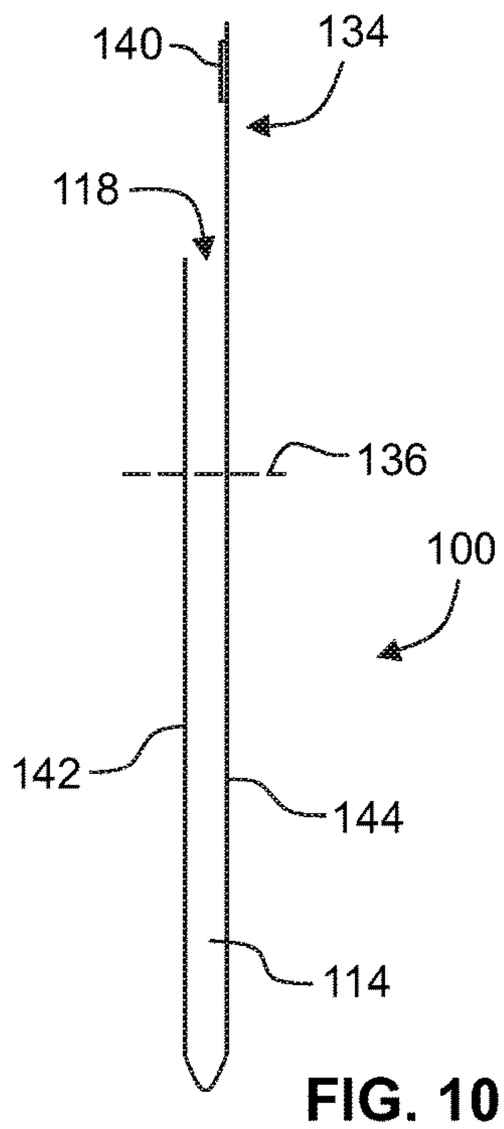

FIG. 10

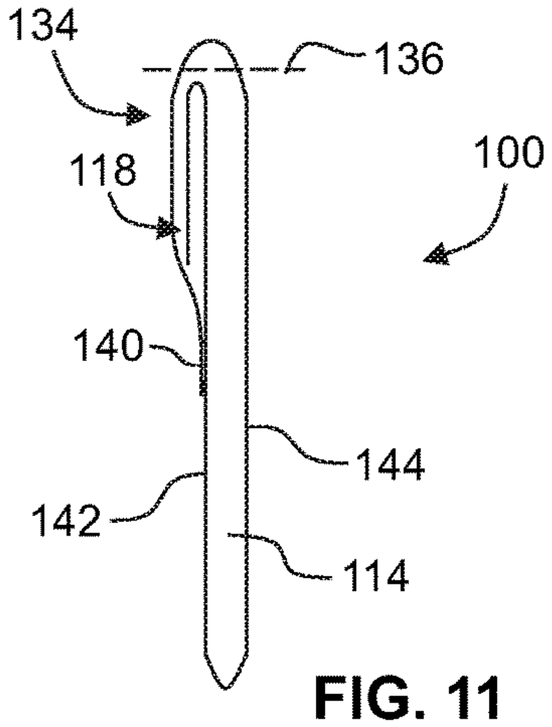

FIG. 11

OBJECT-SECURABLE ELECTROMAGNETIC-SHIELDING APPARATUS

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] None.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates generally to the field of electromagnetic shielding enclosures.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Radio frequency (RF) shielded enclosures exist for many purposes, such as wireless testing, data security, and forensics investigations. In the conventional art, these RF enclosures possess features that are often developed for established applications. As more devices become connected, however, new applications arise which require innovative RF enclosures that fulfill niche requirements. Embodiments of the apparatus disclosed herein address market needs that have only become apparent recently.

[0004] By way of example, in recent years, the auto industry has seen an influx of "smart" key fobs, a type of vehicle key that can unlock, start, and perform other operations on a vehicle without human interaction, often by simply being within close proximity to the vehicle. Although convenient, this feature has opened a new set of problems for vehicle dealerships, auto body shops, mechanics, or any individual associated with vehicle maintenance, as well as the general public. Smart key fobs allow a vehicle to not only unlock when in close proximity, but to start without a traditional physical key in the ignition. This presents a major concern for anyone performing servicing on a vehicle. For example, if a car were to be void of oil during an oil change, an accidental start could destroy the engine, severely or fatally injure the mechanic, and potentially even injure the customer. As more and more vehicles are designed with smart key fobs, the need for a key fob RF shielding solution becomes significant. While many conventional RF enclosures could shield the signal from the key fob, none have been developed with the unique set of features to truly meet the needs of this application, or other applications with similar requirements.

SUMMARY

[0005] Certain deficiencies of the prior art may be overcome by the provision of one or more embodiments of an object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus. The preferred embodiments of the apparatus disclosed herein (also referred to herein as an "enclosure") may be particularly advantageous for use by mechanics and auto body shop employees. However, they may also be advantageously used by vehicle manufacturers, professional valet services, office parking services, car rental companies, general consumers, and anyone looking to signal-isolate their smart key fobs from their vehicles.

[0006] Embodiment of the apparatus may be portable, quick to open and close, and high-shielding to ensure signal blockage. The enclosure apparatus may include "wings" on both sides with, for example, magnets, to allow the enclosure to attach to any flat or irregular surface. The wings may protrude laterally from the sides to allow the enclosure to conform to rounded, irregular, or odd shaped surfaces, which are often encountered in locations designed for certain preferred applications of the apparatus.

[0007] A closure flap may include magnets as well, to allow the apparatus to seal completely and easily, but also to allow it to stay open against a magnetic surface when, for example, the closure flap is articulated upward. A supplemental section of conductive fabric above the fold line of the closure flap may be designed to maintain conductive contact even around bulky devices such as large keysets

[0008] Embodiments of the presently-disclosed apparatus may be constructed with malleable materials to allow for varying dimensions of contents inside. The shape of the apparatus may be manipulated to adhere to irregular surfaces, such as corners and rounded sides of objects to which the apparatus is suspendedly secured. The apparatus is portable, lightweight and small in size to allow a user to easily move it from one location to another, while keeping devices inside shielded.

[0009] Certain preferred embodiments of the apparatus may be soft-sided, flexible, high-shielding, and durable. The outside may include a polymer (e.g., rubberized or PVC) coating or shell which protects the entire exterior, and even parts of the interior cavity, from dirt, oil, water and other contaminants or corrosives commonly found in or around vehicles and vehicle servicing environments. Moreover, the coating may prevent an external object from becoming damaged by the devices placed within the apparatus. Such coating may also allow contaminants to be easily wiped off of the apparatus, and may be thick and tough enough to protect the apparatus and surrounding objects against friction and scratches.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] Further advantages of the present invention may become apparent to those skilled in the art with the benefit of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments and upon reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

[0011] FIG. **1** is a diagrammatic front view of one example embodiment of an object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus, with a closure flap shown in a closed position;

[0012] FIG. **2** is a diagrammatic front view of an embodiment similar to that of FIG. **1**, but wherein the closure flap in an open position;

[0013] FIG. **3** is a diagrammatic partial perspective view of an embodiment similar to that of FIG. **1**, but wherein the closure flap is shown in the process of being manually moved from a closed position to an open position;

[0014] FIG. **4** is a diagrammatic perspective view of an embodiment similar to that of FIG. **1**, but wherein the mouth portion of the pouch element is shown manually retained in an open configuration and the flap portion is shown in an open position;

[0015] FIG. **5** is a diagrammatic perspective view of an embodiment similar to that of FIG. **1**, but with the apparatus shown suspendedly secured about the corner of an object such as a metal wall or pillar;

[0016] FIG. **6** is a diagrammatic perspective view similar to that of FIG. **5**, but with the apparatus shown suspendedly secured about a rounded cylindrical metal object;

[0017] FIG. **7** is a diagrammatic perspective view of an example embodiment of an object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus, showing the apparatus suspendedly secured to a horizontal beam object and providing

electromagnetic-signal isolation between a transmitting electromagnetic key fob device and an ambient environment external to the apparatus in which a corresponding vehicle resides in close proximity to the key fob;

[0018] FIG. **8** is a diagrammatic rear view of the embodiment shown in FIG. **2** with the closure flap in an open position;

[0019] FIG. **9** is a diagrammatic front view of an embodiment similar to that shown in FIG. **1**, but wherein the object securement element includes multiple eyelets with central apertures extending through respective securement wings;

[0020] FIG. **10** is a diagrammatic cross-sectional view of an apparatus similar to that shown in FIG. **2**, with the closure flap in an open position; and

[0021] FIG. **11** is a diagrammatic cross-sectional view of an apparatus similar to that shown in FIG. **1**, with the closure flap magnetically secured in a closed position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0022] Referring now to the drawings, like reference numerals designate identical or corresponding features throughout the several views.

[0023] Example embodiments of an object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus are shown generally at **100**. Embodiments of apparatus **100** may be particularly adapted for providing electromagnetic-signal isolation between electromagnetic devices (such as, for example, a key fob **102** or other remote keyless system) and an ambient environment **106** external to the apparatus **100**. Accordingly, the apparatus **100** may prevent transmission of electromagnetic signals from a device **102** from undesirably reaching a corresponding signal receiver **108** (for example, in a vehicle **110**) which is in close proximity to the device **102**. With respect to certain preferred embodiments of the apparatus **100**, the term "close proximity" may mean within 20 meters.

[0024] Embodiments of the apparatus **100** may preferably comprise at least a pouch element **112** and at least one object securement element **120**. The pouch element may include a pouch cavity **114** defined therein, a front panel **142**, a rear panel **144**, and a mouth portion **118**. The pouch cavity **114** may be at least partially enveloped by electromagnetic shielding material. For example, the pouch element **112** may be principally or largely constructed of such material.

[0025] The mouth portion **118** may have an open configuration (see, for example, FIG. **2**) and a closed configuration (see, for example, FIG. **1**). Referring to FIG. **4**, in certain preferred embodiments, the mouth portion **118** allows passage of a vehicle RF key fob device **102** into and out of the pouch cavity **114** when in the open configuration, and blocks passage of a vehicle RF key fob device **102** into and out of the pouch cavity when in the closed configuration. By way of example, a typical vehicle key fob device may be 1-3 inches in length, 1-2 inches in width and 0.5-1 inches thick.

[0026] The pouch element may be suspendedly securable to an object **104** in the ambient environment **106** by way of the object securement element(s) **120**. For example, an object securement element **120** may include one or more object securement magnets **122**.

[0027] In particular embodiments, the pouch cavity **114** may be electromagnetic-signal isolated from the ambient environment **106** when the mouth portion **118** is in the closed configuration. For example, the electromagnetic-signal isolation may be achieved merely by closure of the mouth portion **118**, irrespective of the inclusion or position of a closure flap **134**.

[0028] In typical preferred embodiment of the apparatus **100**, such as those shown in FIGS. **3-6**, the pouch element **112** is flexible. Moreover, the apparatus **100** may preferably include an external surface **124** with a flexible polymer coating thereon. The flexible polymer coating may comprise, for example, PVC or the like.

[0029] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **5-7**, certain embodiments of the apparatus **100** may include one or more securement wings **126** by which the suspended securability is achieved. The one or more securement wings **126** may support or house respective object securement magnets **122**. In particular embodiments of the apparatus **100**, a pair of securement wings **126** may be disposed on opposing sides of the pouch element **112**. The securement wings **126** may each be flexibly connected to the pouch element **112**, thereby defining, for example, a flex joint **128**. Referring to FIG. **2**, each of the securement wings **126** may include a pair of object securement magnets **122** disposed at opposing ends (e.g., **130** and **132**) of the respective securement wing **126**.

[0030] Particular preferred embodiments of an object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus may include a closure flap **134** hingedly connected to or foldably associated with the pouch element and configured to be moved between closed and open positions. The closure flap **134** may be at least partially comprised of electromagnetic shielding material. In such cases, when the closure flap **134** is in the closed position, the mouth portion **118** is RF-shielded from the ambient environment **106**. When the closure flap **134** is in the open position, the mouth portion may not be RF-shielded from the ambient environment **106**.

[0031] In certain preferred embodiments of the apparatus **100**, the closure flap **134** may include one or more flap securement elements **140**. The flap securement elements **140** may be, for example, flap securement magnets. In such embodiments, the closure flap may be magnetically securable to the front panel **142** when in the closed position, and thereby magnetically releasably retained in the closed position. Moreover, when the closure flap **134** is in the open position, the closure flap **134** may be magnetically securable to the object **104** (e.g., to which the apparatus **100** is suspendedly secured) for retaining the closure flap **134** in the open position.

[0032] Electromagnetic-shielding material used in the construction of the apparatus **100**, including in one or more of the pouch element **112**, closure flap **134**, and securement wings **126**, may be referred to as "Faraday fabrics." Such fabrics may comprise, for example, a conductive fiber with a weave. In certain preferred embodiments, the fabric may be composed of, for example, a blend of polyester fiber (e.g., 62%+/−7%), metallic copper (e.g., 25%+/−7%) and metallic nickel (e.g., 13%+/−7%). The conductive fiber may have a thickness, for example, of 0.08 mm+/−0.02 mm. In particular embodiments, silver may be used in the fiber blend shielding material as a conductive constituent, either to supplement or in place of the copper and nickel constituents. The electromagnetic-shielding material may include a Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) resin coating or the like.

[0033] FIG. **2**, illustrates a front view of a preferred embodiment of the apparatus **100** with the closure flap **134** raised to open position and securement wings **126** expanded laterally outward. Contents, such as electromagnetic devices

102, may be introduced into the pouch cavity **114** of the apparatus **100** through the mouth portion **118**. An outer coating or layer, such as PVC, may be present on the external surface **124** of the apparatus **100**. Such coating may be, for example, lightweight, durable, flexible, water-resistant, contaminant-resistant, and possibly rubberized. Other protective materials may be implemented on the outside of the apparatus **100**, such as plastic, tarpaulin, or any other material capable of protecting the apparatus **100** from contaminants or corrosives present in the ambient environment.

[0034] The closure flap **134** may be held up and in an open position by, for example, flap securement magnets **140** in the top corners so as to adhere to the object **104** to which the apparatus **100** is suspendedly secured (e.g., a metal surface or the like). The securement wings **126** may be expanded and securely held against the object **104** (e.g., a metal surface thereof) by object securement magnets **122** sewn into the apparatus **100** in various locations, including inside the ends (**130** and **132**) of the securement wings **126**, the corners of the closure flap **134**, and even lateral connection points defined along the fold line **136** where the closure flap **134** folds over to seal the mouth portion **118**. Additionally, or in the alternative, other means of removably securing the apparatus **100** to a surface of an object **104** may be incorporated into the apparatus **100**, such as holes (e.g., eyelets **146** in FIG. **9**), grommets, hooks, hook and loop fasteners, a combination thereof or the like. Securement wings **126** may or may not be present, depending upon the embodiment.

[0035] FIG. **1** illustrates a front view a preferred embodiment of the apparatus **100** with the closure flap **134** in a closed position. In such embodiment, the closure flap **134** may be securely held shut by magnet connection. In alternative embodiments, the method the closure flap may be securable in a closed position by hook and loop fastener, snaps, or any other means of securing the closure flap **134** in the closed position (e.g., against the front panel **142** of the apparatus **100**. In yet further embodiments, a closure flap **134** may not be used. Rather, such further embodiments may provide a cinch strap, a roll, a door, an elastically-biased lip around the mouth portion **118**, or some other means of reliably and reversibly sealing the pouch cavity **114** from passage of electromagnetic signals **116** (e.g., to maintain an RF-tight seal).

[0036] FIG. **5** illustrates an embodiment of the apparatus **100** adhering (suspendedly secured) to a right angle of an object **104***a* by wrapping around a corner of the object. The ability to attach to irregular surfaces, particularly those comprised of metal, is a feature that renders the apparatus **100** uniquely compatible with various surfaces such as work booths, podiums, racks, shelves, the car itself, and kiosk stations used in auto body and vehicle maintenance shops. Preferred embodiments of the apparatus **100** allow for effortless removal, transport, and reattachment of the RF enclosure and subsequently the keys inside of it.

[0037] FIG. **6** illustrates an embodiment of the apparatus **100** adhering to a curved metal object **104***b* such as a corrugated metal barrel. The securement wings **126** with object securement magnets **122** also help stabilize the apparatus **100** on the object **104***b* vertically and rotationally, thus preventing it from undesirably rotating or sliding along the surface of the object **104***b*. This figure illustrates the ability of embodiments of the apparatus **100** to conform to (e.g., wrap around) irregular surfaces to which the apparatus **100** is suspendedly secured.

[0038] FIG. **8** illustrates the backside of an embodiment of the apparatus **100** with the closure flap **134** in its open position. Preferred embodiments of the apparatus **100** may uses a rubberized or otherwise elastic coating (e.g., PVC) throughout the external surface **124** of the apparatus and along the inside surface of the closure flap **134**. This coating may be resistant to contaminants and abrasion. The shielding material inside the apparatus **100** may be susceptible to damage from corrosion, abrasion, and deterioration, which is a significant concern within a service shop environment, such as an automotive service area. The outer durable material may protect the shielding liner inside from exposure to damaging elements in the environment such as dirt, grease, chemicals, and even friction. The outer material may also protect external surfaces from damage from the materials in the enclosure itself. For example, it may be desirable to attach the apparatus **100** to the side of a vehicle during service, or perhaps in other applications such as consumer home use. The abrasion-resistant coating materials prevent magnets and other components or devices within the apparatus **100** from damaging the surface of the vehicle. In alternate embodiments of the apparatus, other coatings or outer materials may be used, such as plastic, tarpaulin, waterproof vinyl, or the like.

[0039] Referring to FIG. **4**, the mouth portion **118** may be manually expandable to a size large enough for hands to easily and rapidly insert or remove a keyset. The volume of the pouch cavity **114** may allow for a large keyset with accessories. In the embodiment illustrated, the structure of the apparatus **100** may be sufficiently flexible so as to encompass keysets of various sizes while still being able to wrap around curved, angled, or irregular shaped object surfaces. The inner shielding liner may be made with three layers of RF signal blocking fabric on each side which make complete mutual contact at the mouth portion **118** when the mouth portion is in closed configuration and the closure flap **134** is folded over in its closed position. In further embodiments, more or fewer layers of shielding fabric may be used. In further alternative, certain embodiments may not use shielding fabric, but instead may incorporate conductive plates, continuous conductive metal, shielded foam, or any other material that provides RF shielding.

[0040] Referring to FIG. **3**, in certain embodiment of apparatus **100**, when the closure flap **134** is folded over and closed, the compartment (e.g., pouch cavity **114**) becomes signal isolated thus preventing a key fob or other device **102** held inside from communicating with a vehicle **110**. If anything impedes the connection point, or the seal is not perfect in any way, RF shielding may be compromised. In the illustrated embodiment, the user opens the enclosure by pulling upward on the closure flap **134** and closes the enclosure by folding the top of closure flap **134** over and connecting flap securement magnets **140** on the closure flap **134** to another set of magnets **140***b* on the front mid-section of front panel **142** of the enclosure. Magnets may provide a preferred and rapid method of opening and closing the apparatus **100**. However, in alternate embodiments, other methods to secure the closure flap **134** in closed position may be used such as hook and loop, elastic, buttons, a combination thereof or the like.

[0041] Referring again to FIG. **2**, the illustrated embodiment may include a section of conductive fabric (e.g., within the zone of supplemental shielding fabric **138**) above the flap fold line **136**. This extra section may increase the shielding effectiveness of the apparatus **100** by ensuring that bulky devices placed inside the pouch cavity **114**, such as keys, do not push the front panel **142** and rear panel **144** apart so as break the electromagnetic seal across the mouth portion **118**. This extra section of fiber may maintain conductive contact beyond the point of the fold, thereby ensuring that shielding failure does not occur at or around the mouth portion **118** during use of the apparatus **100**.

[0042] Referring to FIG. **7**, the securement **126** wings may be constructed with high-strength magnets **122** (e.g., neodymium magnets) sewn into the corners. The illustrated embodiment may include strong enough object securement magnets **122** to support the apparatus **100**, as well as devices **102** inside, with only a single securement wing **126** attached to an object **104***c* surface at one time. Another purpose of high-strength magnets may be to allow the apparatus **100** to adhere to semi-magnetic surfaces, which may be difficult to adhere to using low-strength magnets. Future embodiments may have greater or fewer magnets in alternate placements, or may not rely on magnets at all to attach the apparatus to external surfaces. Moreover, object securement magnets **122** may be sewn into each corner (e.g., ends **130** and **132**) of the securement wing **126**, while the middle portion in between may remain empty. The lack of connection in the middle may allow a user to easily pull the enclosure away from a metal surface with reduced resistance or stress being applied to seams of the apparatus **100**.

[0043] While embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described, it is not intended that these embodiments illustrate and describe all possible forms of the invention. Rather, the words used in the specification are words of description rather than limitation, and it is understood that various changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus for providing electromagnetic-signal isolation between electromagnetic devices and an ambient environment external to the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

a pouch element including a pouch cavity and a mouth portion, the pouch cavity being at least partially enveloped by electromagnetic shielding material, the mouth portion having an open configuration and a closed configuration; and

an object securement element by which the pouch element is suspendedly securable to an object in the ambient environment, the object securement element including one or more object securement magnets.

2. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **1**, wherein the mouth portion

(a) allows passage of a vehicle RF key fob device into and out of the pouch cavity when in the open configuration; and

(b) blocks passage of a vehicle RF key fob device into and out of the pouch cavity when in the closed configuration.

3. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **1**, wherein the pouch cavity is electromagnetic-signal isolated from the ambient environment when the mouth portion is in the closed configuration.

4. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **1**, wherein the pouch element is flexible.

5. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **1**, wherein the apparatus includes an external surface with a flexible polymer coating thereon.

6. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **1**, wherein the apparatus includes one or more securement wings by which the suspended securability is achieved.

7. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **6**, wherein the one or more securement wings house respective said one or more object securement magnets.

8. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **6** including a pair of said securement wings disposed on opposing sides of the pouch element.

9. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **8** wherein the securement wings are each flexibly connected to the pouch element.

10. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **6**, wherein each of the securement wings includes a pair of said object securement magnets disposed at opposing ends of the respective securement wing.

11. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **1**, including a closure flap foldably associated with the pouch element and configured to be moved between closed and open positions, wherein,

(a) the closure flap is at least partially comprised of electromagnetic shielding material;

(b) when the closure flap is in the closed position, the mouth portion is RF-shielded from the ambient environment; and

(c) when the closure flap is in the open position, the mouth portion is not RF-shielded from the ambient environment.

12. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **11**, wherein the closure flap includes one or more flap securement magnets.

13. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **12**, wherein

(a) the pouch element includes a front panel and a rear panel; and

(b) the closure flap is magnetically securable to the front panel when in the closed position.

14. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **13**, wherein when the closure flap is in the open position the closure flap is magnetically securable to the object for retaining the closure flap in the open position.

15. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus for providing electromagnetic-signal isolation between electromagnetic devices and an ambient environment external to the apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

(a) a pouch element including a pouch cavity and a mouth portion, the pouch cavity being at least partially enveloped by electromagnetic shielding material, the mouth portion having an open configuration and a closed configuration;

(b) an object securement element by which the pouch element is suspendedly securable to an object in the ambient environment; and

(c) a closure flap foldably associated with the pouch element and configured to be moved between closed and open positions, wherein,

(i) the closure flap is at least partially comprised of electromagnetic shielding material;

(ii) when the closure flap is in the closed position, the mouth portion is electromagnetic-shielded from the ambient environment;

(iii) when the closure flap is in the open position, the mouth portion is not electromagnetically-shielded from the ambient environment;

(iv) the closure flap includes one or more flap securement magnets;

(v) the pouch element includes a front panel and a rear panel;

(vi) the closure flap is magnetically securable to the front panel when in the closed position; and

(vii) when the closure flap is in the open position the closure flap is magnetically securable to the object for retaining the closure flap in the open position.

16. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **15**, wherein the mouth portion

(a) allows passage of a vehicle RF key fob device into and out of the pouch cavity when in the open configuration; and

(b) blocks passage of a vehicle RF key fob device into and out of the pouch cavity when in the closed configuration.

17. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **15**, wherein the apparatus includes one or more securement wings by which the suspended securability is achieved.

18. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **17**, wherein each of the securement wings houses one or more object securement magnets therein.

19. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **15**, wherein the apparatus includes a flexible polymer coating.

20. An object-securable electromagnetic-shielding apparatus as defined in claim **19**, wherein the flexible polymer coating is comprised of PVC.

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