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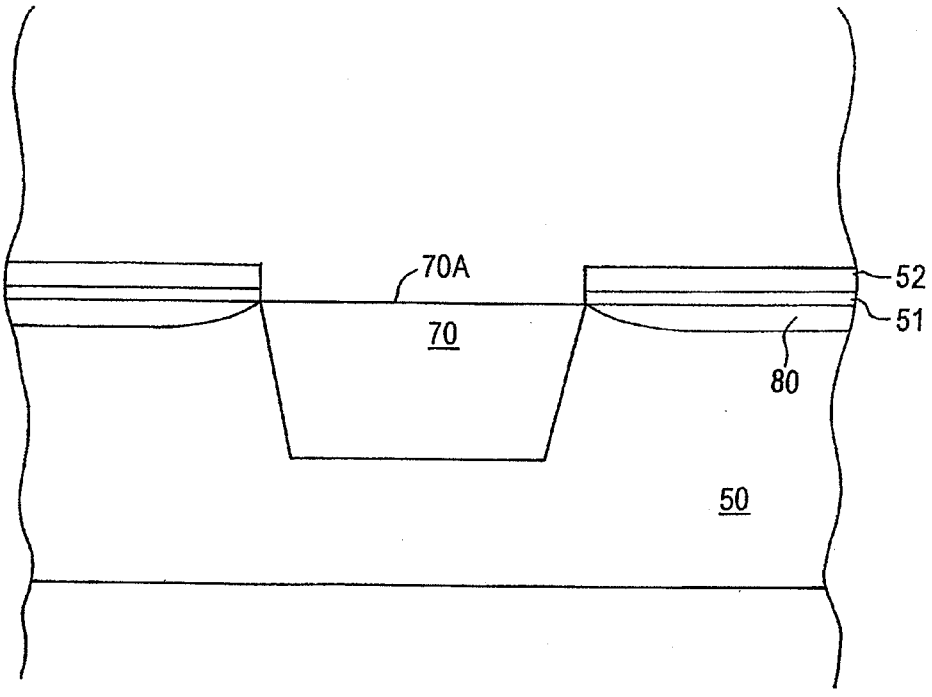
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD OF REDUCING STI DIVOT FORMATION DURING SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE FABRICATION



(57) Abstract: STI divot formation is eliminated or substantially reduced by employing a very thin nitride polish stop layer (52), e.g., no thicker than 400Å. The very thin nitride polish stop layer (52) is retained in place during subsequent masking, implanting and cleaning steps to form dopant regions (80), and is removed prior to gate oxide (101) and gate electrode (100) formation.

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