

# THE ADVOCATE

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## **Stamford company Wiggin and Dana opens China practice**

By Richard Lee

Four years after establishing its India practice, an area law firm is looking to Asia again, targeting China, the continent's biggest economy.

Wiggin and Dana has formed a China practice comprised of a team of lawyers representing several of the firm's practice groups, and it's led by corporate partner David Schaffer, who will direct the effort out of the Stamford office.

Schaffer is in the midst of a 10-day tour with state officials of six cities in China to present investment and collaboration opportunities to Chinese businesses, investors and government officials.

"A focus is on biotech and life sciences. The rising middle class provides an opportunity for U.S. businesses to do business in China and U.S. businesses looking to raise money," Schaffer said, adding that the practice will assist Chinese business operators in dealings in the United States.

Wiggin and Dana, which will model the practice on its India unit, already works on an affiliate basis with TerraLex in China, but the relationship has limits, said Robert Benjamin, chair of the firm's executive committee.

"Having David and his group identifying new opportunities both here and in China allows us to interact directly with an expanded client base," he said. "Most firms based in Connecticut struggle with identity. Having China and India practices gives us an extra dimension with global contacts. India has been very successful for us. China continues to provide tremendous opportunities for those who understand how things work there."

The firm, which has seven attorneys in its India practice, has named five attorneys to the China division.

Schaffer, a Ridgefield resident, was a logical choice to head the China practice because of his academic and work experience in East Asia and his understanding of international business, Benjamin said.

He has represented clients on cross-border deals with an aggregate transaction value in excess of \$3 billion.

Doing business in China can be difficult for a U.S. company, and legal advice is needed to maneuver through the process, said Jonathan Huneke, spokesman for the U.S. Council for International Business.

"There's still a great deal of opaqueness with the Chinese system, " he said, commenting that safeguarding intellectual property in China is an issue. "Your local partner may take off with your intellectual property if you don't take care of it properly."

Wiggin and Dana, which also has offices in Greenwich, New Haven, New York City and Philadelphia, understands the need to adapt as businesses participate in a changing global economy, said Christopher Bruhl, president of the Business Council of Fairfield County, which periodically hosts "familiarization tours" to China for area businesses.

"Connecticut's professional firms are constantly evolving to meet the challenges presented by doing business in the world's emerging markets," he said.

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