

Wiggin Latest Conn. Firm With Capital Idea

LEADERS LAUNCH D.C. OFFICE WITH PLANS TO HIRE UP TO EIGHT LAWYERS

By **MICHELLE TUCCITTO SULLO**

Wiggin and Dana is the latest Connecticut-based firm to open an office in Washington, D.C., a move designed to bring its lawyers closer to some important clients and regulatory agencies.

James Glasser, a partner with the firm and chairman of the litigation department, said expanding with this new office, a couple of blocks from the White House, was a logical step. The office opened Jan. 15.

“Wiggin and Dana has an international trade and compliance practice that has grown in the past six years,” Glasser said. “A lot of our clients are in this area. Several of our attorneys have been spending a lot of time in D.C. It makes sense for us to be in D.C. given the amount of activity our firm has there.”

While representing clients, Glasser said the firm routinely deals with various regulatory agencies such as the U.S. State Department, U.S. Justice Department, the Office of Foreign

Assets Control and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Glasser said having an office in Washington also gives the firm an opportunity to expand its client base there.

The new office will also mean new hiring for the New Haven-based firm. Wiggin and Dana is trying to expand the D.C. office by recruiting other attorneys who focus on international trade compliance; government contracts and compliance; and white-collar defense, government investigations and corporate compliance.

“Our goal is to staff the new office with between six and eight lawyers,” Glasser said. “We are really excited about this new office, which for us, is a logical extension for a fast-growing practice. The biggest advantage is being close to our clients, which allows us to be more responsive to them and to regulators.”

Paul Hughes, the firm’s chairman, said opening the Washington, D.C.,



Wiggin and Dana’s James Glasser said a Washington, D.C., office will enhance the firm’s growing international trade practice.

office will allow the firm’s partners and associates dedicated to the international trade compliance and white-collar practices to continue to provide counsel to clients in the defense, financial, education and manufacturing sectors.

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“We plan to expand those practices as well as others, facilitating better access and service for our clients that have headquarters or embassies in D.C., or business before D.C.-area courts and regulators,” Hughes said.

Five partners at the firm will staff the office on a rotating basis during the recruiting process: Glasser, Tahlia Townsend, Joseph Martini, David Ring and David Hall.

Range of Sizes

At least a half dozen other Connecticut firms have offices in the nation’s capital. They include Shipman & Goodwin, Day Pitney, Cantor Colburn, Axinn Veltrop & Harkrider, Halloran & Sage and Ury & Moskow. The D.C. offices have attorney staffing levels ranging from one to about 30, according to law firm websites.

For Cantor Colburn and Axinn Veltrop, the Washington appeal is obvious. Both firms focus on intellectual property work, and Washington is home to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, which hears patent and trademark cases.

As for the other firms, Day Pitney has had an office in D.C. for about 10 years, and it has four lawyers and two staff members working there full time. When the firm opened the office, it recruited Washington-area lawyers, though its Connecticut-based attorneys occasionally go there.

“We have a number of energy clients who wanted us to have an office down there full time because of regulatory agencies down there,” said Day Pitney managing partner Stanley Twardy Jr. “There really was a demand that we have an office and people there.”

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is just one of the agencies the firm wanted to have an office near, Twardy said. The firm’s white-collar attorneys also have to work with congressional committees. “Having a D.C. office conveys to our clients that we can handle their legal needs down in D.C., and can represent them and their interests in the courts, before regulatory agencies and in Congress,” Twardy said.

Frederic Ury of Ury & Moskow in Fairfield, said his firm has one attorney working out of its D.C. office, which it opened in 2004. The attorney, Edward J. Parr Jr., had worked in the Food and Drug Administration’s general counsel’s office before joining the firm, Ury said. They opened the office for the purpose of securing this attorney, according to Ury.

“Our D.C. office is solely focused on pharmaceutical and medical device product liability matters, primarily in the mass tort arena,” Ury said.

According to Ury, the advantage to having a D.C. office is “having an attorney skilled in FDA regulatory affairs to help navigate the

pre-emption land mines associated with products that have received FDA approval.”

William McGrath, managing partner at Halloran & Sage, said that firm has three attorneys based permanently in Washington. Additionally, the firm’s government affairs team and other attorneys frequently visit the Washington office when required by client needs. McGrath said Halloran & Sage opened its D.C. office 15 years ago, in 2001, “to enhance our services in the areas of government contracting and federal regulatory matters.”

“The office has always been staffed by well-established local attorneys with extensive knowledge and experience,” he said.

Meanwhile, Shipman & Goodwin partner James Ruggeri said the firm opened its D.C. office in May 2010, and it now has 27 resident attorneys, with another five or so visiting weekly. They focus on insurance, bankruptcy, intellectual property, general corporate law and data privacy law.

“Having a D.C. office enables us to serve our clients on a national basis in addition to being in close proximity to national regulators and agencies,” Ruggeri said. “It also enables us to recruit attorneys nationally from the country’s most prestigious law firms and from clerkships. Given our track record since opening the office in May 2010, attorneys see that ours is a model that works in the ever-changing law firm business.” ■