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Life sciences law powerhouse Wilson Sonsini to open office in Boston

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Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, widely recognized as one of the top life sciences law firms in the country, is opening an office in Boston next month.

The office will be led by partners Lou Lieto and Mark Fitzgerald, who will be moving to Boston from Wilson Sonsini's Washington, D.C., office, and Mark Solakian, who is joining the firm from Bedford-based biofuels company Joule Unlimited Technologies, where he most recently served as senior vice president and general counsel.

In a statement, the West Coast firm singled out the life sciences, technology and energy industries as areas where they would like to build up in Boston. It's the life sciences practice that is its crown jewel, however: An index released this week by litigation financier Lake Whillans rated Wilson Sonsini as the best life sci-

ences firm in the country.

The firm's chairman, Larry Sonsini, said in a statement that the firm has long had an eye on Boston. He called it a "place we must be," citing the scientists, entrepreneurs, universities and financial services companies that call the city home, as well as Boston's status as one of the largest venture markets in the U.S.

The trio of partners will be joined by a team of associates and patent agents. In addition, Vern Norviel, the leader of Wilson Sonsini's patents and innovation practice, will spend approximately half his time in the Boston office going forward, according to the firm.

Fitzgerald, a corporate and securities practitioner, had lived in Massachusetts before joining Wilson Sonsini to help open its Washington office in the year 2000. Lieto is an intellectual property attorney, focusing on patent prosecution and counseling for pharmaceutical, medical device and other companies.



Vern Norviel, the leader of Wilson Sonsini's patents and innovation practice, called Boston "one of the leading life sciences markets in the world."

Prior to his time at Joule, Solakian worked as an in-house counsel at two biotech companies: Cambridge's Helicos Bio-Sciences and California-

based Affymetrix.

The office will be located on the 37th floor of 28 State St. It has offices in 10 cities in the U.S., three in Asia and one in Europe.