Last year was filled with some rare happenings for Norviel, he said. On June 13, the U.S. Supreme Court concluded that isolated fragments of genomic DNA are naturally occurring and therefore not patent eligible, while complementary DNA is not a product of nature and therefore is patent eligible.

The arguments adopted by the court, Norviel said, mirrored an amicus brief filed by him and Wilson Sonsini partner Gideon Schor on behalf of Eric Lander, a leading genomics researcher and the president of the Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT.

While the brief wasn’t cited in the written opinion, the court did discuss the brief during oral arguments, Norviel said.

“I would have never dreamed they would discuss our brief,” he said. “For an IP guy, that’s extremely unusual.”

The esoteric subject matter involved the isolation of genes. “My role was to help explain why that was known a long time ago. It’s not that complicated. It’s a law of nature. A big one.”

As for the decision’s implications for drugmakers, Norviel said, “They need to make certain that their patents are done right, and that they’re not covering natural products.”

Investors, he added, “have to be careful and not buy into a bad one.”

Norviel said another rarity last year happened when two of his clients got their drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration within one month. They are Charleston Laboratories Inc., which focuses on pain products, and Ceptaris Therapeutics Inc., which is developing a product for the early treatment of some forms of cancer.

Overall, Norviel said, “There is enthusiasm and vigor in the industry and that has changed dramatically from last year. Money is more available now and the stock market has opened up. Private investors are more enthused.”

— Pat Broderick