

TOP INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWYERS 2017

Vernon A. Norviel

FIRM

Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC

CITY

San Francisco,
San Diego and Boston

SPECIALTY

Patent prosecution
and counseling

Norviel has three decades' experience formulating successful strategies for life science companies and developing their intellectual property programs. Clients include Delinia Inc., Cirina Ltd., Muse bio, Guardant Health Inc., Cellular Research Inc., Sirona Biochem Corp., Forty Seven Inc., 10x Genomics Inc. and Biodesy Inc.

In May, Norviel counseled Cirina as it became an operating subsidiary of Grail Inc., the Bill Gates-backed life sciences startup intending to develop technologies to detect cancer early when it can be cured.

He served as lead patent counsel for Delinia, a privately held biotechnology company developing novel therapeutics for autoimmune diseases, in its \$775 million agreement to be acquired by pharmaceutical heavyweight Celgene Corp. in January. The deal was expected to expand Celgene's inflammation and immunology drug franchise. "This is the kind of thing most venture capitalists live for," Norviel said of the acquisition. "Delinia's technology is very exciting to Celgene, and they were willing to write a nice check."

Norviel provides ongoing IP representation to Muse bio, which develops new CRISPR enzymes for disease diagnostics.

Norviel, who began his career at Chevron Corp., said he is among a cadre of veteran biotech lawyers in Northern California who formerly worked for petroleum companies. He mentioned as colleagues such as the late Albert P. Halluin, who began at Exxon Mobil Corp., worked at Cetus Corp. and moved to Wilson Sonsini; Thomas E. Ciotti, who started at Chevron and retired from Morrison & Foerster LLP; and Q. Todd Dickinson, a Chevron general counsel who became Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

"All have had a tremendous impact in health care," Norviel said.

"All of us old biotech lawyers started in oil in the Bay Area," Norviel said. "Biotech needed chemists, and that's what we knew. It's essential to get deep into the technology to be effective in advising clients on deals."

Today Norviel said he runs a shop of younger lawyers with advanced degrees. "All these geniuses who work for me have Ph.D.s in genetics and molecular biology."

Norviel said he's content with his master's degree. "I was grandfathered in," he said. "It's better to be lucky."

Norviel interrupted a camping trip in Colorado for his Daily Journal interview.



It's not the only time outside interests intruded. "For some reason every time I go on one of my biking and camping adventures one of my companies ends up doing a deal," he said. "I worked on Delinia from the Grand Canyon, and the big call was from a pay phone at a ranger station. It is a little known secret that ranger stations still have pay phones. Bring quarters."

— John Roemer