

Cooley's Chicago Launch Attracts Market Attention, As Office Prepares to Add 'Elite Litigators'

The lateral partners said they expect their clients to join them at their new firm.

By Christine Simmons and Andrew Maloney
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Cooley has arrived in Chicago with a 10-partner team, hiring partners from DLA Piper, Latham & Watkins and Winston & Strawn, as the Midwest city becomes increasingly competitive for Am Law 200 firms.

Cooley announced the office on Monday but it was **rumored to be in the works** in recent weeks. The Silicon Valley firm said it's not done recruiting, noting the Chicago opening allows it to attract additional talent in building a full-service Chicago office, "including a bench of elite litigators expected to join in the next few months."

Firm leaders and lawyers in a group interview Monday afternoon declined to elaborate on who else may join, but Yvan-Claude Pierre, a corporate and capital markets partner at Cooley who led the expansion into Chicago, said it would happen "sooner rather than later" and that "there has been a lot of interest in and around the top practitioners in this marketplace looking to join Cooley."

The firm said the Chicago launch team includes legal advisers to emerging, high-growth and new-economy companies, counseling clients throughout their life cycle.



(Photo: Jason Dojy/ALM)

Cooley's office in Santa Monica, California.

Cooley lawyers said the Midwest is budding with opportunities in that space, not only in Chicago but in places like Columbus, Minneapolis and Iowa.

"The number of venture capital firms interested in backing and supporting companies in Chicago and other cities in the Midwest has grown," said Mike Lincoln, Cooley's vice chair, in the interview. He said that trend has coincided with workforces in tech and other industries that are more spread out, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to Pierre, who will split his time between Chicago and New York, the Chicago office team also includes Rick Ginsberg from Winston, Laurie Bauer

from Latham and Greg Grossman from DLA Piper. The three, who focus on emerging companies and venture capital, said they expect their clients to join them at their new firm.

They also said part of what drew them to the firm was a culture of working with innovative clients from the start-up phase through growth and initial public offerings, then beyond. Ginsberg said “very few firms” have the capability to service clients at both ends of that process.

“We’ve been aware of Cooley’s culture and have had a lot of opportunities to work across from a lot of their deal teams, and they’ve been great experiences,” Bauer added.

Other office founding partners include former Winston lawyers Christina Roupas and Courtney Tygeson, who specialize in capital markets and public companies; mergers and acquisitions partner Erin Kirchner from DLA Piper; fund formation partner Zach Robert from Winston; employment partner Ryan Vann from DLA Piper; and New York-based executive compensation and benefits partner Nyron Persaud from Winston.

The group includes some of Winston’s tech and capital markets leadership. Ginsberg was the chairman of Winston’s tech and emerging companies practice, while Roupas was co-chairwoman of Winston’s capital markets practice.

A Winston representative declined to comment on the exits, and DLA representatives did not return messages seeking comment. A Latham spokesperson said the firm wishes Bauer well and thanked her for her contributions.

Cooley noted the historical significance of a tech firm moving into the Windy City. “For the first time, an elite Silicon Valley law firm is opening an office to serve the thriving Midwest ecosystem, home to

high-growth, disruptive companies, a burgeoning venture capital community, and some of the largest and most sophisticated companies, including many of the most recognizable tech and life sciences brands in the nation,” the firm’s announcement said.

In a statement, chairman Joe Conroy said Chicago has been “the financial and innovation hub of the Midwest and home to many of our game-changing clients, including high-growth, disruptive companies, venture capitalists fueling the market and established Fortune 500 companies.” He added the firm looked forward to opening an office in a city and region “where we have loved to work for decades.”

Cooley has a temporary office the team will use in the short run while they look for a permanent space, a firm representative said.

Cooley is one of a number of out-of-town firms with their eyes set up on Chicago. Arent Fox, a 385-attorney firm with roots in Washington, D.C., has been in [merger talks](#) with Schiff Hardin, a Chicago-based Am Law 200 firm. Several firms have opened shop in the Windy City during the pandemic, including New York-based Willkie Farr & Gallagher; Detroit-based Dickinson Wright; Milwaukee-based von Briesen & Roper; Washington, D.C.-based Venable (which opened with a construction law group from Schiff); and New York-based financial services boutique Murphy & McGonigle.

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The logo for Cooley, featuring the word "Cooley" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.