



**U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
1225 New York Ave. NW - Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005**

December 12, 2006

Ms. Wendy R. Weiser
Deputy Director, Democracy Program
Brennan Center for Justice
161 Avenue of the Americas, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10013

Dear Ms. Weiser:

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request received by the U. S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) on November 13, 2006. The request sought certain agency records concerning two agency draft reports, *The Voter Fraud and Intimidation Report* and *The Voter Identification Report*. Specifically, the request sought: (1) "the report on voter identification prepared by the Eagleton Institute of Politics and the Moritz College of Law," (2) "the report on voter fraud and voter intimidation prepared by Tova Wang and Job Serebrov," (3) The voter identification and voting fraud report requests for proposals and contracts, and (4) communications relating to the above reports between the EAC and Eagleton Institute of Politics, the Moritz College of Law, Ms. Tova Wang, Mr. Job Serebrov, or other third parties.

This letter is a partial response to your request and deals only with your request for documents consistent with items (1) -- (3), above. With regard to item (4), we continue to search our files, e-mails and computers for all relevant communications. We expect to have all relevant, releasable documents collected, reviewed and sent to you within five working days. If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact the undersigned.

With regard to items (1) -- (3) above, please find copies of all responsive contracts and request for proposals enclosed. Upon review of the records, you will find a few places where small portions of information have been redacted (in black). As required by FOIA exemption 6, the EAC has redacted certain pieces of personal information, including home addresses, telephone numbers, and personal e-mail addresses. The EAC has also redacted confidential commercial information as mandated by FOIA exemption 4. Specifically, the EAC has redacted information that can be used to calculate unit costs regarding a contractor's labor rates. With regard to your requests for "the report on voter identification prepared by the Eagleton Institute of Politics and the Moritz College of Law," and "the report on voter fraud and voter intimidation prepared by Tova Wang and Job Serebrov," these draft documents are predecisional drafts protected by the Deliberative Process Privilege and exempted from release under 5 U.S.C. §522(b)(5).

As you may know, the Deliberative Process Privilege protects intra-agency documents that are (1) pre-decisional in nature and (2) part of the deliberative process. In other words, the documents must be part of a process that recommends or presents opinions on a policy matter or governmental decision before that matter is finally decided. It is a well settled matter of law that the work of contract employees and

contractors (“consultants”) constitute intra-agency documents.¹ This is true even where the consultants are deemed to be independent contractors and are not subject to the degree of control that agency employment entails.² The courts have made this determination after recognizing that agencies have a special need for the opinions and recommendations of temporary consultants.³ Ultimately, deliberative documents are exempt from release (1) to encourage open and frank discussions on policy matters between agency subordinates and superiors, (2) to protect against premature disclosure of proposed policies and (3) to protect against public confusion that might result from disclosure of rationales that were not in fact the ultimate basis for agency action.⁴

In both cases, the reports you have requested are drafts, representing one phase of the deliberative process—before the document was vetted by staff, approved by the executive director and reviewed and approved by the Commissioners (the relevant policy makers). Ultimately, the draft documents were created by experts to aid the EAC’s Commissioners in their decisions. The consultants had no personal interest in their submissions and had no agency decision-making authority. Each was tasked with simply providing pre-decisional research and information to the EAC. Their efforts were limited to creating truthful and comprehensive draft reports. Finally, both reports when finalized would constitute an EAC decision or a policy determination.

These conclusions are born out in the facts surrounding the projects at issue, including the attached contract documents. First, the voter fraud and intimidation study you have requested is a draft of a final document that has already been released after being vetted by staff and approved by the EAC Commissioners. It is available in its final form on EAC’s website (www.eac.gov). The draft document at issue was created by two contract employees hired pursuant to 5 U.S.C. §3109 (see 42 U.S.C. §15324(b)). Individuals hired under this authority enter into an employment relationship with the EAC. The contract employees were supervised by an EAC program director who participated directly in the project. For example, the supervisor approved, facilitated, scheduled and participated in interviews conducted for the project. Further, the contract employees were provided research materials and other support from EAC law clerks and staff. As stated by their contract, these consultants were hired so that the EAC could “...obtain consulting services from an individual who can provide advice drawn from broad professional and technical experience in the area of voter fraud and intimidation.”⁵ Moreover, the contracts clearly forbid the consultants from releasing the draft they created consistent with the privilege the EAC is asserting. The contract states:

All research, information, documents, and any other intellectual property (including but not limited to policies, procedures, manuals, and other work created at the request or otherwise while laboring for the EAC) shall be owned exclusively by the EAC, including copyright. All such work product shall be turned over to the EAC upon completion of your appointment term or as directed by the EAC. The EAC shall have exclusive rights over this material. You may not release government information or documents without the express written permission of the EAC.⁶

¹ Department of the Interior v. Klamath Water Users Protective Association, 532 U.S. 1, 9-11 (2001) (Citing Harry E. Hoover v. Dept. of the Interior, 611 F.2d 1132, at 1138 (1980); Lead Industries Assn. v. OSHA, 610 F.2d 70, 83 (C.A.5 1980) (applying exemption 5 to draft reports prepared by contractors); and Government Land Bank v. GSA, 671 F.2d 663, 665 (CA1 1982)); See also Hertzberg v. Veneman, 273 F. Supp. 2d 67, 76 n.2 (D.D.C. 2003).

² Klamath, at 10.

³ Hoover, 611 F.2d at 1138.

⁴ NLRB v. Sears, Roebuck & Co., 41 U.S. at 151.

⁵ See the consultant contracts for Job Serebrov and Tova Wang, enclosed.

⁶ See *Id.*

Finally, the purpose or subject of the draft report at issue was to make an EAC determination on how voter fraud should be studied by the agency. This was to be done by (1) accessing the nature and quality of the information that presently exists on the subject matter, (2) defining the terms and scope of EAC study as proposed by HAVA, (3) determining what is to be studied and (4) determining how it is to be studied. EAC's interpretation of HAVA and its determination of what it will study and how it will use its resources to study it are matters of agency policy and decision.

With regard to the Voter Identification draft, it was created by Rutgers University in conjunction with the Moritz College of Law (Ohio State University) to "...provide research assistance to the EAC for the development of voluntary guidance on provisional voting and voting identification procedures."⁷ The stated objective of the contract was to:

...obtain assistance with the collection, analysis and interpretation of information regarding HAVA provisional voting and voter identification requirements for the purpose of drafting guidance on these topics... The anticipated outcome of this activity is the generation of concrete policy recommendations to be issued as voluntary guidance for States.⁸

As with the voter fraud and intimidation study mentioned above, the contractors were provided guidance, information, and were directed by EAC personnel. The final product they delivered (draft report sought) was identified as "a guidance document for EAC adoption." Clearly, as noted by the contract, the issuance of Federal guidance to states is a matter of government policy and limited to official EAC action.

The EAC has decided to waive the processing fees for your request. If you interpret any portion of this response as an adverse action, you will have an opportunity to appeal it to the Election Assistance Commission. However, as this letter is only partially responsive to your request, please hold any appeal until your request has been fully addressed. At that time, your appeal must be in writing and sent to the address noted on the above letterhead. Any appeal submitted, must be postmarked no later than 60 calendar days from the date of EAC's final response letter. Please include your reasons for reconsideration and attach a copy of this and subsequent EAC responses.

Sincerely,



Jeannie Layson
Director of Communications
U.S. Election Assistance Commission

Attachments:

1. Your Request Letter (dated November 8, 2006)
2. Responsive Documents

⁷ See EAC Contract, Act Number E4014127 (enclosed).

⁸ See *Id.*