



TEXAS ETHICS COMMISSION



ETHICS ADVISORY OPINION NO. 342

September 13, 1996

Application of contribution limits imposed by the Judicial Campaign Fairness Act to contributions made by a law firm. (AOR-380)

The Texas Ethics Commission has been asked about the contribution limits applicable to a law firm under the Judicial Campaign Fairness Act. Specifically, the requestor asks whether a law firm is allowed to contribute no more than \$2,500 to a candidate for district judge in a judicial district with a population of 250,000 to 1,000,000.

Election Code section 253.155 states that a judicial candidate in a judicial district with a population between 250,000 and 1,000,000 may not accept political contributions from "a person" that in the aggregate exceed \$2,500 for each election in which the candidate is involved. Elec. Code § 253.155(a), (b)(2)(B).

The Code Construction Act applies to the construction of the term "person" in the Election Code. *Id.* • 1.003(a). The Code Construction Act provides that "person" "includes corporation, organization, government or governmental subdivision or agency, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, and any other legal entity." Gov't Code § 311.005(2). A law firm is therefore a "person" for purposes of the Judicial Campaign Fairness Act. *See also* Elec. Code § 253.155(d). Thus, in a judicial district with a population between 250,000 and 1,000,000,¹ a law firm may not contribute more than \$2,500 in the aggregate per election to a candidate for district judge.

SUMMARY

In a judicial district with a population between 250,000 and 1,000,000, a law firm may not contribute more than \$2,500 in the aggregate per election to a candidate for district judge.

¹ A judicial candidate is also limited in what he can accept from persons affiliated with the same law firm. See Elec. Code § 253.157; Ethics Advisory Opinion No. 274 (1995).