D.C. Bar Legal Ethics Committee Opinion No. 268 ATTACHMENT J.12

Conflict of Interest Issues Where Private Lawyers Provide Volunteer Legal Assistance to the D.C. Corporation Counsel; Reconsideration of Opinion 92

Under the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct, a lawyer may give volunteer legal assistance to the D.C. Corporation Counsel and continue simultaneously to represent private clients against the City and its agencies, as long as the requirements of Rule 1.7 are met. Under Rule 1.7(b)(1), a lawyer who wishes to represent a private client against the same City government client that she is representing while working for the Corporation Counsel on an unrelated matter, may do so if she obtains the informed consent of both her private client and her City government client. Similarly, the lawyer may agree to volunteer her services to represent the same City government client that she or her firm are opposing on behalf of a private client in an unrelated matter, if both clients consent after full disclosure. Client notification and consent are not required, however, where the lawyer is not opposing her own City government client but some other agency of the City that is not her client.

The City government client is not always the City as a whole, but may be more narrowly defined as one of the City's constituent agencies. The identity of the government client for conflict of interest purposes will be established in the first instance between the lawyer and responsible government officials in accordance with the general precepts of client autonomy embodied in Rule 1.2. In agreeing to undertake a particular representation, the lawyer must take steps to recognize and respect the reasonable expectation of her other clients, protected by Rule 1.7, that they will receive a conflict-free representation.

Even if Rule 1.7(b)(1) does not apply, because the lawyer's government client is not considered the same government entity she is opposing on behalf of private parties, Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4) may require that the lawyer obtain client consent if her representation of one client will be or is likely to be "adversely affected" by her representation of the other, or if the independence of her professional judgment will be or is likely to be adversely affected by her responsibilities to third parties or by her own personal interests.

Applicable Rules

- Rule 1.2 (Scope of Representation)
- Rule 1.7 (Conflict of Interest: General Rule)

Inquiry

The Committee has been asked to reconsider several conclusions of D.C. Bar Opinion 92 (1980) ("Propriety of Private Attorneys Handling Municipal Cases on a Pro Bono Basis"). Opinion 92 examined the ethical propriety, under the D.C. Code of Professional Responsibility, of a program in which "private attorneys acting on a pro bono basis would assist the City in managing its severely crowded civil docket."[1] The Committee opined in Opinion 92 that the program would be ethically permissible as long as certain conditions were met. The inquirer has asked the Committee to reconsider the continuing validity of two of those conditions, given the intervening adoption in 1991 of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct.[2] The two conditions in question are as follows:

1. A lawyer or firm performing volunteer representational work for the City or any of its agencies may simultaneously represent a private party against the City or any of its agencies only with full disclosure to and consent of both the City and the private party; and.
2. Under no circumstances may a lawyer or firm volunteer to represent a particular agency of the City government while at the same time handling a private matter involving the same agency, or another matter that is or appears to be "closely related," even with client consent.

Summary of Conclusions

For reasons discussed more fully in Part I below, the Committee believes that the conclusion in paragraph 2 above is no longer mandated under the Rules of Professional Conduct. Thus a lawyer may represent a particular City government agency in a matter at the same time she is opposing that agency on behalf of a private client in an unrelated matter, as long as she makes full disclosure to and obtains the consent of both the City government agency and the private client. *See* Rule 1.7(b)(1) and 1.7(c). Moreover, as explained in Part II below, we disagree with the assumption of Opinion 92 that the entire City and all of its constituent agencies must always and necessarily be considered the lawyer's client for conflict of interest purposes. Thus, a lawyer may under certain circumstances perform services for a particular City agency client without

having to notify and obtain the consent of private clients that she is representing against another City agency that is not considered the same client. Nevertheless, even if Rule 1.7(b)(1) does not apply because the lawyer is not opposing her own client, she may be required by Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4) to notify and seek the consent of one or both clients if her representation of one would substantially interfere with her representation of the other, or if her independent judgment in either client's behalf would be adversely affected by her responsibilities to a third party or by her own personal interests.

Discussion

I. Prohibited Representation of Private Parties Against Particular City Agencies or in Particular Matters

Opinion 92 imposed an absolute prohibition against a lawyer's representing a private party against the same particular City agency for which she is performing volunteer services, or in a matter "closely related" to the one she is handling for the City. This absolute prohibition was derived from the "appearance of impropriety" standard of Canon 9 rather than the "conflict of interest" rules of Canon 5. The "appearance" standard was dropped entirely from the Rules of Professional Conduct, and the conflict of interest rules provide that conflicts may generally be waived by the client. *See* Rule 1.7(b) and (c). Under the current rules, the only conflict that cannot be relieved by client consent is the one that arises where a lawyer seeks to take "adverse" positions on behalf of two different clients *in the same matter*. *See* Rule 1.7(a). We therefore conclude that the absolute prohibition on opposing one's own City agency client set forth in paragraph 2 above is no longer applicable.

While a conflict under Rule 1.7(b)(1) would arise if the volunteer lawyer attempted to represent a private client against the City in one matter at the same time she (or one of her partners) was representing the City for the Corporation Counsel in another matter, since the lawyer would in effect be opposing her own client, that conflict could in most circumstances be cured by making full disclosure to both affected clients and obtaining their consent. Thus, a lawyer may represent a private party against a City government agency while simultaneously representing that same City agency in an unrelated matter, as long as both the private client and the agency client are informed of the existence and nature of the lawyer's conflict and do not object to the continued representation. *See* Rule 1.7(b)(1) & (c). *See also* Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4). A lawyer may not, however, represent both the City and a private client in the same matter if they are adverse to each other in that matter, even if both clients consent. *See* Rule 1.7(a).

The fact that the lawyer is volunteering her services to the City, as opposed to serving under a paid retainer, is irrelevant to these conclusions, as it is to the conclusions reached in the remainder of this opinion.

II. Conflicts of Interest Where Volunteer Services Are Performed for the City or One of Its Agencies

We now address the holding of Opinion 92 based on the then-applicable conflict of interest rules, described in numbered paragraph 1 above. Opinion 92 construed the conflict of interest provisions of the former Code, derived from Canon 5, to permit a lawyer to participate in the Corporation Counsel's volunteer program "notwithstanding his or her involvement in other matters affecting the City," as long as two conditions were met: first, it must be "obvious" that the lawyer can adequately represent "both the interests of the City and his or her other private clients;" and, second, "each affected client must consent to the multiple representation after full disclosure."

A. Defining the Client for Conflict of Interest Purposes

Before turning to an analysis of how the current conflict of interest rules apply in this situation, we must deal with one important threshold issue, involving an unexamined assumption made by the drafters of Opinion 92 about the identity of the City government client. That assumption is that the client of the volunteer lawyer working for the Corporation Counsel is always and necessarily "the City" as a whole rather than one or more of the City's constituent agencies.[3] This definition of the government client gives the conflict rules a considerably broader application and effect than they would have if the City government client were more narrowly defined. Under Rule 1.7(b)(1), a lawyer may not take a position in a matter on behalf of one client that is adverse to a position taken in the same matter by another client (not represented by her) unless she obtains consent from both clients.[4] If the client of the volunteer lawyer is the City as a whole, as opposed to one or more of its constituent agencies, Rule 1.7(b)(1) would require the lawyer to obtain consent to the City representation from each and every one of the private clients that she is currently

representing against the City or any of its agencies, and from the City to each and every adverse private representation the lawyer may currently be involved in against it or any of its agencies, without regard to whether there is any real possibility that the substantive concerns animating the conflicts rules are implicated.[5]

Concerned that the breadth of this definition of the City government client will effectively discourage, if not preclude, private law firms from volunteering to assist the Corporation Counsel, the inquirer has asked the Committee to consider whether the volunteer lawyer's client may be defined as a particular City agency as opposed to the City as a whole, so as to ameliorate the sweeping requirement of notice and consent imposed by Rule 1.7(b)(1) read in the light of Opinion 92. We agree with the inquirer that the definition of the City government client contained in Opinion 92 is too broad, and that the City government client may sometimes be defined as narrowly as a single agency. As discussed more fully below, we also believe that the identity of the City government client depends upon a number of discrete considerations and must be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Simply as a matter of common sense it seems apparent that the client of the volunteer lawyer will not always be the entire City, but may sometimes be a smaller part of it. Much like a large modern corporation, the District of Columbia government is a complex and many-faceted entity that sometimes acts through its individual constituent parts (like the subsidiaries of a corporation) and sometimes acts as a single entity, depending upon the particular facts and circumstances. Sometimes a legal matter or issue is relevant only to a single City agency and is of no substantial interest to other agencies or the City as a whole. Sometimes a matter or issue directly affects or is otherwise significant to a number of agencies or the overall City government. In some situations the broad set of interests at stake will be apparent at the outset; in others the broader concerns may emerge during the course of the representation.

Whatever general principles about client identity in the government context can be drawn from our common sense analysis of the governmental interests implicated by particular cases, at bottom the identity of the City government client (like the identity of the corporate client) is not primarily a question of legal ethics. The identity of the government (or corporate) client for all ethical purposes is established in the first instance between the lawyer and responsible public (or corporate) officials in accordance with the general precepts of client autonomy embodied in Rule 1.2.[6] Cf. ABA Formal Opinion 95-390 ("Conflicts of 6 Interest in the Corporate Family Context") (a corporate client may specify, when engaging a lawyer, whether or not "the corporate client expects some or all of its affiliates to be treated as clients for purposes of Rule 1.7").

The ethics rules provide at least one important limitation on what a lawyer can agree to with a client under Rule 1.2, and that is her other clients' right to be protected from conflicts of interest under Rule 1.7. In agreeing to represent a particular government client, a lawyer must take into account the countervailing rights of her other clients whose interests may be adversely affected by this new representation to know of and object to it—just as she must consider the similar rights of the new government client to know of and be able to object to any conflicting existing representations. In working with officials who are authorized to speak for the government client to define the scope of the representation (and hence the identity of the government client for conflict of interest purposes), the lawyer may defer to the government client's wishes only as long as she is able to fulfill her basic responsibilities to her other clients under Rule 1.7, including in particular her obligation not to take a position adverse to them on behalf of another client without their consent. This is the basic right secured to every client by Rule 1.7(b)(1).

The lawyer may not, by agreeing to a narrow definition of the government client, seek to defeat the reasonable expectation of her other clients, arising from and protected by Rule 1.7(b), that they will get a conflict-free representation from their lawyer. Accordingly, the volunteer lawyer must assure herself that the definition of the government client ultimately arrived at in discussions with authorized government officials both recognizes and respects her private clients' right to object when their lawyer proposes to represent interests directly adverse to their own. Her government client has the same right to object to any potentially conflicting private representations.

Thus, we believe that the lawyer who wishes to perform volunteer work for the Corporation Counsel's Office has an obligation to work with that office to develop a clear understanding of the scope of her representation of the City, and to make certain that the agreed upon definition of the government client is a reasonable one in light of all the facts and circumstances, including in particular each of her clients' right to know about, and to give or withhold consent to, her representation of adverse interests.

Ideally, the identity of the government client should be specifically agreed upon between the volunteer lawyer and the government officials who are authorized to speak for the client at the outset of the representation, and committed to writing. In those instances where the identity of the client is not clearly defined, it may be inferred from the reasonable understandings and expectations of the lawyer and those

officials. These in turn may be gleaned from such functional considerations as the organizational structure of the City and the extent to which its constituent parts are related in form and function, and from the facts and circumstances of the particular matter at issue in the representation—including the general importance of the matter to the City as a whole and to other particular components whose programs or activities are not directly involved.

There may be situations in which it can be agreed at the outset that the volunteer lawyer will represent only a single City agency in a relatively discrete matter (e.g., a particular contract) or in a relatively discrete category of cases (e.g., child abuse and neglect cases). In such a case, the lawyer would be free to agree to take on a private representation in which she would be opposing another City agency on an unrelated matter, without having to notify or obtain the consent of either her existing government client or her new private client. That is the easiest case. Another fairly clear case is the one in which the volunteer lawyer represents a City agency in a matter that plainly has City-wide impact or public importance, so that it can fairly be said to implicate the interests of the City generally. In such a case, it would be unreasonable not to regard the lawyer's client as the City as a whole, and she therefore could not undertake a private representation against any City agency without informing and obtaining the consent of the City and, subsequently, the private client. There are dozens of permutations on these basic scenarios, in which the general City-wide interest is sometimes clear and sometimes not so clear. However, the mere fact that a matter is captioned "X v. District of Columbia" is not dispositive of the identity of the government client. Rather, as noted previously, the answer depends upon the reasonable understanding reached between the volunteer lawyer and responsible public officials based upon all relevant facts and circumstances. Of course, as with all representations, the lawyer must be alert to the need to deal with any conflicts that may arise during the course of the representation.[7]

The Corporation Counsel—as chief legal officer for the District and controller of its litigation—asserts that he has legal responsibility for determining the identity of the City government client for purposes of the conflict of interest rules. The Corporation Counsel has indicated his intention to issue guidelines for dealing with conflict issues posed by the volunteer program, that will address the identity of the client and the circumstances in which the District will waive any potential conflicts. We expect that these guidelines, when issued, will be useful to volunteer lawyers not only in determining what kinds of legal assistance they may give to the Corporation Counsel without creating a conflict with their existing private representations, but also in determining the scope of any conflicts. The guidelines may also be useful in determining what new private clients or matters a lawyer may subsequently take on in light of her responsibilities to her City government client(s).

In summary, we conclude that the Rules of Professional Conduct do not identify the City government client, and for the most part provide only general guidance for the lawyer and responsible government officials in reaching an understanding in this regard. The one clear limitation on the lawyer in this context derived from the ethics rules is her other clients' reasonable expectation that they will be allowed to object to their lawyer's representation of interests that would impinge upon her ability to zealously represent their own. Thus we believe that the private lawyer who wishes to perform volunteer work for the Corporation Counsel's office must work with that office to develop a clear understanding of the scope of her representation of the City, and hence the identity of the government client for conflicts purposes, and must take steps to protect all of her clients' right to know about and withhold consent to their lawyer's representation of interests that are adverse to their own.

B. Applicable Conflict of Interest Rules

Assuming that the relevant City government client has been identified, it remains to explain how the current conflict of interest rules apply in this situation.

1. Direct Conflicts Under Rule 1.7(b)(1)

As noted, Rule 1.7(b)(1) prohibits a lawyer from taking a position on behalf of one client that is directly adverse to a position taken by another client in the same matter (represented of course in this matter by another lawyer) without the consent of both clients. *See* note 4, *supra*. Thus, if a lawyer wishes to undertake a volunteer representation of a particular City agency that she or her firm is already opposing on behalf of a private client, the lawyer may do so only if she informs both the private client and the new City agency client of the "existence and nature of the possible conflict and the possible adverse consequences of such representation," and they give their consent.[8] Rule 1.7(c)(1). The conflicts of each lawyer in a firm are imputed to all other lawyers in the firm. Rule 1.10.

For example, if a volunteer lawyer is considering taking on a matter for the Corporation Counsel that

involves defense of a suit brought against the Mayor and/or the City Council, or a suit attacking some City-wide program or regulation (so that the client must be deemed to be the City as a whole), the lawyer must make full disclosure to and seek consent from each of her firm's private clients who have matters pending against the City or any of its agencies. She must also inform the Corporation Counsel of any conflicting private representations being pursued by her or by other lawyers in her firm. Conversely, if a volunteer lawyer is working on a City-wide matter and is then asked to represent a private party against the City or one of its agencies, she must inform the Corporation Counsel and seek his consent. Consent must also be 8 obtained from the new client.

On the other hand, Rule 1.7(b)(1) does not apply, and client notification and consent are not required, if a lawyer is not opposing her own City government client but some other agency of the City that is not her client. For example, if a lawyer hired to defend a program or action of a particular City agency, such as the Housing Department, were representing only the Housing Department in this matter, she would be required to disclose the fact of her Housing Department representation and seek consent from those of her firm's private clients who had matters pending against the Housing Department or against the City as a whole.[9] But she would not be required to disclose her Housing Department representation to private clients who had matters pending against other particular City agencies whose functions were unrelated to the Housing Department and that otherwise had no interest in the issues involved in the Housing Department representation and would be unaffected by its outcome.

Thus, in a case where a lawyer is representing the City as a whole, she is obliged to obtain the City's consent before opposing one of its constituent agencies, as well as the consent of any of her private clients who have interests adverse to the City (or, of course, the particular agency she would be representing). Similarly, if the lawyer is representing a private client against the City as a whole, she must obtain the private client's consent before undertaking any City government representation, even one involving a discrete agency program with no functional or programmatic relationship to the City-wide matter she is otherwise involved in. The only situation in which the lawyer may cabin her conflict and avoid having to conduct a broad canvass of all clients with City-related business is where both her public and her private representations involve discrete agency programs with no City-wide implications.

2. Indirect Conflicts Under Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4)

Even if Rule 1.7(b)(1) does not apply because the lawyer's City government client is not considered to be the same City client that she is opposing, her representation of a City agency may still raise an "indirect" conflict of interest under subsections (2) through (4) of Rule 1.7(b) if it "interferes in some substantial way with the representation of another" client. D.C. Bar Opinion 265 (1996) ("Positional Conflicts"). This would as a practical matter result in the same need to determine that both clients could be adequately served, and then to make full disclosure to and obtain the consent of "each affected client" to the multiple representation. Under Subsections (2) and (3) of Rule 1.7(b), if the lawyer believes that her representation of the City agency "will be or is likely to be adversely affected" by her representation of a private client, or vice versa, the lawyer must obtain the consent of the affected client or clients. Under subsection (4), client consent must be obtained if the lawyer believes that the independence of her professional judgment on behalf of a client "will be or reasonably may be adversely affected" by her responsibilities to a third party or by her own personal interests.

In contrast to the situation involving a direct conflict under Rule 1.7(b)(1), where disclosure and informed consent are mandatory once it is apparent that the lawyer will be opposing her own client, a lawyer has some discretion in deciding whether an indirect conflict under Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4) exists. Whether a particular volunteer representation will "adversely affect" the lawyer's representation of another client (or vice versa) depends upon the particular facts and circumstances and is in the first instance essentially a matter for the lawyer to decide. Likewise, the existence of a conflict arising from the lawyer's responsibilities to third parties or her own personal interests is primarily a question of fact. The lawyer may decide that she should make disclosure to and seek consent from one client but need not do so from the other.

The "adverse effect" inquiry under subsections (2) through (4) is primarily a functional one, generally involving both the relative importance of the representation to the respective clients or to their lawyers and the directness of the adverseness between them. It may require inquiry into the nature of the issues, the amount of money at stake, and the likelihood that either client would otherwise be substantially and foreseeably affected by the outcome of the other's matter. Sometimes, the "adverse effect" inquiry will also involve the particular role the volunteer lawyer is expected to play in the matter, and the "intensity and duration" of her relationship with the lawyers she is opposing. *Cf.* Formal Opinion 1996-3 of the Committee on Professional and Judicial Ethics of The Association of the Bar of the City of New York (1996)(conflicts of

interest where one lawyer represents another lawyer).
Without attempting to exhaust the kinds of situations that would give rise to an adverse effect under Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4), we offer the following examples to illustrate the kinds of circumstances that in this Committee's view could require a lawyer to obtain consent from one or both clients under these provisions. 1) A volunteer lawyer whose firm is handling a matter for private clients against one City agency, and who is subsequently asked by the Corporation Counsel to defend another City agency in a matter whose outcome will have a substantial and foreseeable impact on the outcome of the firm's private clients' matter, may be required to obtain one or both clients' consent. 2) A volunteer lawyer who represents one City agency and wishes to make certain arguments about that agency's authority that are inconsistent with arguments she is making on behalf of a private client against another City agency in an unrelated matter, may be required to obtain consent from one or both clients if the success of her arguments on behalf of one client "will, in some foreseeable and ascertainable sense, adversely effect the lawyer's effectiveness on behalf of the other" client. *See* Opinion 265, *supra*. 3) A volunteer lawyer performing work for one City agency who wishes to take a leading role representing a private party in a controversial matter involving another City agency should anticipate having to obtain consent from both clients if she believes it likely that one representation will have an adverse effect on the independence of her professional judgment or her credibility in the other. 4) A volunteer lawyer who works closely and for extended periods of time with full-time Corporation Counsel lawyers, or is closely supervised by Corporation Counsel lawyers, may find it difficult to exercise independent professional judgment in opposing the same lawyers with whom she is working or who are supervising her, and in such a situation she may decide that she should not accept a private representation in which she would be opposing her colleagues, without notifying and seeking the consent of both the Corporation Counsel and her private client.[10]
The above examples are not intended to be exhaustive, but merely to suggest the possibilities for "indirect" conflicts to develop in the context of a volunteer program such as the one described in Opinion 92.

Conclusion
The conclusion of Opinion 92 that, under the former Code of Professional Responsibility, a lawyer may never oppose a City agency that she is also representing on behalf of another client in an unrelated matter, is no longer mandated by the Rules of Professional Conduct. Under Rule 1.7(b)(1), a lawyer may oppose her own City government client on behalf of a private client in an unrelated matter as long as she makes clear the nature of the conflict to both clients and obtains their consent.
Moreover, we believe that in certain limited situations a lawyer may represent a City agency without having to notify or obtain the consent of private clients that she is representing against other discrete City agencies. Opinion 92's apparent assumption that the client of the Corporation Counsel lawyer is always and necessarily the City as a whole is incorrect, and in any event has no foundation in the ethics rules. The rules contemplate that the identity of the City government client for conflict of interest purposes will be decided on a case-by-case basis between the lawyer and responsible government officials, taking into account the reasonable expectation of the lawyer's other clients that they will receive a conflict-free representation. Their decision will generally be based on functional considerations derived from the structure and relationship of the government entities involved and from the facts and circumstances of the particular matter at issue in the representation. Even if the lawyer would not be opposing her own client, she may be required by Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4) to obtain client consent if her representation of one client would interfere in some substantial way with her representation of the other, or if the independence of her judgment in either client's behalf would be compromised by her responsibilities to or interests in a third party or by her own personal interests, including her personal and professional relationships with the lawyers on the other side.

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1. Under the program described in Opinion 92, private law firms were encouraged to donate the services of attorneys to assist the Corporation Counsel in a variety of legal matters, generally on a part-time basis. This program reportedly yielded little by way of relief for the Corporation Counsel's Office, at least in part because of the conditions on lawyer participation (particularly the requirement of obtaining waivers from other clients) set forth in Opinion 92. In 1992, a second and

more formal effort was made to encourage lawyers from private firms to volunteer their services to the City, this time by granting them a special dispensation from the imputation rule. The amendments enacted in that year to Rule 1.10 and 1.11 provided that conflicts resulting from one lawyer's voluntary service to the Corporation Counsel need not be imputed to all other lawyers in her firm. *See* Rule 1.10(e) and Comment [19]; Rule 1.11(h) and Comments [12] and [13]. (The 1992 amendments to Rules 1.10 and 1.11 were made permanent in 1994 and extended to the D.C. Financial Control Board in 1996). According to the commentary to Rule 1.10, this special dispensation from the imputation rule depends upon the volunteer lawyer's working full-time for the Corporation Counsel (there must be a "temporary cessation" of a volunteer lawyer's practice with the firm, "so that during that period the lawyer's activities which involve the practice of law are devoted fully to assisting the Office of the Corporation Counsel"). Thus, when a private lawyer is detailed full-time to the Corporation Counsel's Office under the so-called "Rule 1.10 program," her firm will not be regarded as representing the City, and will not need to alert and obtain consent from those of its clients who "might reasonably consider the representation of its interests to be adversely affected" by the firm's representation of the City. *See* Comment [7] to Rule 1.7. (It follows by necessary implication that where a lawyer is volunteering for the City on a less than full-time basis, or does not otherwise meet the requirements of a "Rule 1.10 detail," the conflicts resulting from her government service are imputed to all lawyers in her firm." We understand that the Rule 1.10 program has attracted few volunteers, and has accordingly provided no more benefit for the Corporation Counsel's Office than did the pre-1992 part-time details discussed in Opinion 92.

2. Amendments to the Rules issued by the D.C. Court of Appeals on October 16, 1996, make a number of revisions to the text and commentary of Rule 1.7, none of which affect the conclusions of this opinion. We would note, however, the extensive attention paid in new Comments [13]-[18] to conflicts of interest where the client is a "corporation, partnership, trade organization or other organization-type client." While not directly applicable to situations in which the client is a governmental entity, *cf.* Comment [7] to Rule 1.13, we believe this discussion may provide a useful supplement to the discussion of conflicts under Rule 1.7(b)(2)-(4) in Part II B(2), *infra*.
3. Opinion 92 does not say in so many words that the client of the volunteer lawyer is always and necessarily the entire City for Canon 5 conflict of interest purposes. Nevertheless, this has been the generally accepted interpretation of the opinion since its issuance more than 16 years ago, and there appears to be little support in the text for a contrary position. Moreover, the fact that the absolute bar under the "appearance" standard of Canon 9 is clearly applicable only to representations involving *particular* City agencies if further evidence that the drafters of Opinion 92 intended a very broad definition of the City client for conflict of interest purposes.
4. Where a conflict arises under Rule 1.7(b)(1) because the lawyer is opposing her own client on behalf of another client, both clients are presumed to be "potentially affected" under Rule 1.7(c)(1) and both must therefore consent to the representation after full disclosure.
5. Opinion 92 advises a firm wishing to participate in the Corporation Counsel's volunteer program to "send a standardized letter to all clients identified as having present or potential future dealings with the City, describing the program and explaining in general how the judgment of the firm's attorneys might or might not be affected by the firm's participation in the program." This suggests an even broader application for the condition, requiring the lawyer to obtain consent from clients with present or *potential* City business without regard to whether the lawyer or her firm is actually representing the client in connection with that City business. We see no basis in the current rules for such an expansive reading of the conflict of interest rules. Even in a case when the entire City is considered the lawyer's client, consent must be obtained only from clients who the lawyer is currently representing against the City (or one of its agencies) or those who have actually asked her so to represent them.
6. We do not regard the definition of the government client contained in Rule 1.6(i) ("the client of the government lawyer is the agency that employs the lawyer") as dispositive for conflict of interest purposes. And, there is no indication that this or any other a priori definition of the government client was intended to apply in this context in the otherwise thorough consideration of the "government lawyer" issue by the Sims Committee in 1988. *See* Report by the District of Columbia Bar Special Committee on Government Lawyers and the Model Rules of Professional Conduct (1989).
7. The provisions of Rule 1.7(d) (1996 amendment) govern conflicts arising after the representation commences that are "not reasonably foreseeable at the outset of a representation." As we read this

provision, it subjects such unforeseeable late-arising conflicts to the provisions of Rule 1.7(b)(2) through (4) only, and not to those of Rule 1.7(b)(1).

8. The government client can generally decide what information it needs or wants about the volunteer lawyer's potentially conflicting representations, in the context of deciding its own identity. Thus, the process of self-definition functions for the government client as a way of consenting to the volunteer lawyer's conflicting private representations to which it would be entitled to object if it chose to define its identity more broadly. In this fashion, the government client may decide that it has no interest in knowing about any conflicts that might otherwise be imputed to the volunteer lawyer under Rule 1.10 by virtue of representations by other lawyers in her firm.
9. Given the decision-making structure of government entities, we believe that the conflicts of the City are necessarily attributed to its constituent parts, and that the conflicts of the constituent parts of the City are necessarily attributed to the City as a whole—though the conflicts of one of the City's constituent agencies may or may not be attributed to other City agencies.
10. Because this conflict is in the nature of a personal conflict, as opposed to one derived from the lawyer's representation of another client, we doubt that it would be imputed to other lawyers in the firm. *See* ABA Formal Opinion 96-400 ("Job Negotiations with Adverse Firm or Party") (Rule 1.10 "cannot be construed so broadly as to require that all lawyers in a firm be presumed to share their colleague's personal interest in joining the opposing firm in a matter," though each lawyer must individually evaluate whether his "'responsibilities to . . . a third person'—*i.e.*, his colleague—or his own interest in his colleague's interest, may materially limit the representation.")