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Public Works for a Better Government

February 1, 2014

Mr. V. David Zvenyach
Office of the General Counsel
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 4
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Zvenyach:

I am writing to you in regards to the DC Official Code. First, let me congratulate you once again on the tremendous progress the District of Columbia has made with the assistance of dedicated volunteers for the [DCCode.Org](#) effort. That effort is based on the unofficial code, but it is very gratifying to see how useful the site has become and especially to see how closely you've worked with the local volunteers to help them in their efforts. I do not believe I am overstating the case when I say you are the most most active legislative counsel in the nation [on Github](#) and I can't tell you enough how impressive that is.

You had previously requested that we remove from our site the District of Columbia Official Code which we had purchased from West Publishing Company. However, your vendor is no longer West Publishing, and your [letter of September 13, 2013](#) referred repeatedly to the LexisNexis Corporation, your current vendor. The vendor literature states in their [product description](#) that "this is the only version of the District of Columbia Code that is reviewed and approved by the government of the District of Columbia, meaning that this is the definitive, authoritative Code you know you can trust."

As you know, our aim is to make the official codes that govern our cities and states available in more useful fashions. As we are about to begin the process of upgrading our code collection—including the District of Columbia—to include the most current 2014 codes, I was hoping you could clear up two points for me.

First, you objected to our posting the Official Code we obtained from West despite the fact that you have switched to a different vendor for the work you direct. I am unclear as to why you were objecting to that prior work. Was this objection directly from the District of Columbia, or were you transmitting as well the objections of your current or prior vendor?

Secondly, I am unclear if the current Official Code is in fact the "definitive. authoritative Code" that is "reviewed and approved by the government of the District of Columbia," why there would be an objection from you (or, again, perhaps your vendors) for making these definitive edicts of government available on the Internet. It would seem

to me and any casual observer that any definitive code that is published under the direction and supervision of your office is a statement of the law, and I do not understand the objections to making available these **edicts of government** in light of long-standing public policy in favor of the rule of law.

As you know, we have respectfully declined to comply with your previous request to remove the previous official code, and as we begin the process of upgrading to the 2014 codes, I would like to better understand who has objections to these actions so that we may engage in dialogue with all the parties to discuss these important public policy issues. As you know, I've met with your office repeatedly and have offered to do so with other jurisdictions (such as Georgia, Idaho, and Mississippi), so that we can all meet our common objectives of an informed citizenry.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you and the District of Columbia for shipping us copies of your old official codes going all the way back to the 1940 edition. I will be scanning all these documents over the next few months and looking forward to making this important historical information available.

Respectfully yours,



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