November 6, 2007
In re: IFC and Panhel
Constitutional Council Majority Opinion
Chief Justice Zaia

Chief Justice Zaia:

In October 2007, members of the Treasury’s Budget Committee approached Constitutional Council concerning the constitutionality of the student groups Interfraternity Council (IFC) and Women’s Panhellenic Association (Panhel). IFC and Panhel are the governing bodies for Washington University’s social fraternities and sororities, respectively. They are both currently registered as Category I student groups. The Statutes to the Constitution of the Student Union explicitly states that “Social fraternities and sororities may not be registered as Student Union groups” (Article IV, Section 1, d). The question raised is whether IFC and Panhel may be registered student groups given that they are primarily concerned with Greek life.

Constitutional Council interprets the clause “social fraternities and sororities may not be registered as Student Union groups” (Art. IV, Sec. 1, d) as prohibiting individual social fraternities and sororities from registering as Student Union student groups. We do not read it as a blanket prohibition against Greek life. In considering IFC and Panhel’s individual constitutions and stated purpose, it is clear that these groups program for the entire Greek community and for the Washington University student body in general. IFC and Panhel are governing bodies and not social fraternities or sororities in and of themselves. They do not have to be student groups but there is nothing in the Constitution which prohibits them from being registered as student groups.

Budget Committee also raised the concern that, if IFC and Panhel are able to remain as student groups, they would be spending the majority of their funding on Greek-only events. There is no Constitutional bearing to make a ruling on the funding of these events. It is the Budget Committee’s authority to set its own rules concerning what it will or will not fund.

One final point raised during the consideration of this issue was that of Phi Lambda Psi, the Greek Women’s Health and Wellness Honorary. Like IFC and Panhel, Phi Lambda Psi is not actually a social sorority but rather its stated purpose is to raise awareness concerning women’s health and wellness in the greater Washington University community. Phi Lambda Psi and similar organizations, therefore, are also not prohibited from having Student Union student group status.

There was no dissent in this case.