



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

October 7, 2010

Ms. Catherine M. Ferguson-Gilbert  
First Assistant District Attorney  
52<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District Attorney's Office  
P.O. Box 919  
Gatesville, Texas 76528-10

OR2010-15350

Dear Ms. Ferguson-Gilbert:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 401064.

The Justice of the Peace of Bell County (the "justice of the peace") received a request for a specified autopsy report. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We note that the information at issue is maintained by the justice of the peace. Section 552.003(b) of the Government Code excludes the judiciary from the Act. Therefore, the Act neither authorizes information held by the judiciary to be withheld nor requires that it be disclosed. *See Open Records Decision No. 25 (1974)*. Accordingly, information maintained solely by the justice of the peace is not subject to public disclosure under the Act. *See Gov't Code § 552.0035* (access to information maintained by or for judiciary is governed by rules adopted by supreme court); Tex. R. Jud. Admin. 12 (public access to judicial records). Thus, the justice of the peace need not release such information in response to this request.<sup>1</sup> As our determination is dispositive, we need not address your claims against the disclosure of the information at issue.

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<sup>1</sup>We note that records of the judiciary may be public under other sources of law. *See Gov't Code § 29.007(d)(4)* (complaints filed with municipal court clerk); *id.* § 29.007(f) (municipal court clerks shall perform duties prescribed by law for county court clerk); Loc. Gov't Code § 191.006 (records belonging to office of county clerk shall be open to public unless access restricted by law or court order); *see also Star-Telegram, Inc. v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54, 57 (Tex. 1992) (documents filed with courts are generally considered public and must be released); Attorney General Opinions DM-166 (1992) at 2-3 (public has general right to inspect and copy judicial records), H-826 (1976); *Open Records Decision No. 25 (1974)*.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Laura Ream Lemus  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

LRL/eb

Ref: ID# 401064

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)