



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 16, 2016

Mr. Bob D. Odom  
Assistant District Attorney  
27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Texas  
County of Bell  
P. O. Box 540  
Belton, Texas 76513-0540

OR2016-03642

Dear Mr. Odom:

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# 604733.

The Bell County Justice of the Peace, Precinct 4 (the "justice of the peace") received a request for a specified autopsy report. You claim the submitted information is not subject to the Act. You also claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered your argument and reviewed the submitted information.

We note the Act is applicable to information "written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business" by a governmental body. Gov't Code § 552.002(a)(1). However, the Act's definition of "governmental body" "does not include the judiciary." *Id.* § 552.003(1)(B). Information "collected, assembled, or maintained by or for the judiciary" is not subject to the Act but instead is "governed by rules adopted by the Supreme Court of Texas or by other applicable laws and rules." *Id.* § 552.0035(a); *cf.* Open Records Decision No. 131 (1976) (applying statutory predecessor to judiciary exclusion under Gov't Code § 552.003(1)(B) prior to enactment of Gov't Code § 552.0035). The instant request is for information maintained by the justice of the peace. Therefore, we conclude the requested information is

not subject to the Act and need not be released in response to this request for information.<sup>1</sup> As we are able to make this determination, we do not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Jesse Harvey  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JH/eb

Ref: ID# 604733

c: 2 Requestors

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<sup>1</sup>We note records of the judiciary also 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); Local 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).