



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 2, 2020

Mr. R. Blake Ewing
Assistant District Attorney
33rd and 424th Judicial District Attorney's Office
1701 East Polk, Suite 24
Burnet, Texas 78611

OR2020-10079

Dear Mr. Ewing:

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# 828174.

The Burnet County Justice of the Peace, Precinct Three (the "justice of the peace") received a request for a specified autopsy report. You claim the submitted information is not subject to the Act. In the alternative, you claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

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 is instead "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). Therefore, the Act neither authorizes information held by the judiciary to be withheld, nor does it require such information be disclosed. *See* Open Records Decision No. 25 (1974). Because a justice of the peace is a member of the judiciary, the records that a justice of the peace maintains are not subject to the Act. *See* Tex. Const., art. V, § 1; ORD 25. The present request is for information maintained by the justice of the peace. Accordingly, we conclude the requested information is not subject to the Act and need not be released in response to this request for

information. As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your arguments against disclosure of the requested information.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Meredith L. Coffman
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MLC/be

Ref: ID# 828174

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)