



DAN A. GATTIS

County Judge

WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TEXAS

January 11, 2016

Texas Association for Children and Families
c/o: Mr. Tom Mowdy
1805 Carey Avenue
Taylor, TX 76574

RE: Texas Association for Children and Families

Dear Mr. Mowdy:

This letter is in response to requests that have been made during the Public Comment Period of prior sessions of the Williamson County Commissioners Court ("Commissioners Court"). As you know, speakers at prior sessions of the County Commissioners Court have requested that said Court conduct an investigation relating to allegations of corruption in the Williamson County Family Law Courts.

First, I would like to thank you and other speakers who took the time to contact the Commissioners Court, either through email or in person, on this topic. I understand all affected parties are in difficult situations and are only searching for the best avenue for their families.

With that said I am of the opinion that such requests cannot be fulfilled by the Commissioners Court since it does not have purview or authority over family law cases in Williamson County and the way in which family law cases are handled in Williamson County. Rather, the County Court at Law Judges and the District Judges have been granted complete and absolute jurisdiction over the cases that are docketed in their courts.

With regard to the Commissioners Court power over the county budget, a commissioners court's authority is limited to the extent that its refusal to approve a requested expenditure precludes an elected officer from carrying out the legal responsibilities of the office. *See Vondy v. Comm'rs Court*, 714 S.W.2d417,422 (Tex. App. -- San Antonio 1986, writ ref'd n.r.e.). You should also be aware that "[i]n Texas, an elected officer occupies a sphere of authority, which is delegated to that officer by the Constitution and laws, which another officer may not interfere with or usurp." *Abbott v. Pollock*, 946 S.W.2d 513, 517 (Tex. App.--Austin 1997, pet. denied). As a result, the control that the Commissioners Court may have over other independently elected officials is limited.



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If someone has a claim that a criminal act has taken place, he or she would need to contact the appropriate law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction where the alleged criminal act took place so the proper agency can investigate the allegation. Claims of improper conduct committed by a District Judge or County Court at Law Judge could be submitted to the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct. Claims relating to the conduct of a Texas licensed attorney could be submitted to the State Bar of Texas. Claims of improper conduct by a licensed medical professional would need to be submitted to the appropriate licensing or regulatory agency of that particular medical profession. Finally, to the extent a member of the public believes that she or he has civil claims, that individual should consult with their own private legal counsel.

I wanted to provide you with this letter so that you and others would have a better understanding of the Commissioners Court's inability to satisfy the requests that have been submitted to it and to further notify you of the proper entities, bodies, and agencies that may possibly assist you with your requests.

Sincerely,

Dan A. Gattis,
County Judge