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★
Norma Chávez

RECEIVED
JUN 06 2006
OPINION COMMITTEE

June 5, 2006

RQ-0498-GA

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Attorney General
209 West 14th Street
Austin, TX 78711

FILE # ML-44833-06
I.D. # 44833

RE: The authority of the El Paso District Clerk or County Clerk to establish an online electronic database accessible to the public

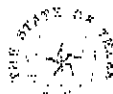
Dear Attorney General Abbott:

I respectfully request your opinion on the authority of the El Paso District Clerk or County Clerk to create an electronic database that may be accessible via the internet to allow the public to more easily access court documents.

Technology is allowing governmental bodies to store and process information and documents more quickly and efficiently than ever before. This in turn facilitates and improves access of information for the public. However, current state laws may not provide sufficient clarity regarding the use of technology by governmental bodies to store and provide information.

Under current state law, may the El Paso District Clerk or County Clerk create an electronic database accessible online to display civil, family and criminal case docket information in its entirety and all document images pertaining to all cases filed regardless of case disposition or status?

If such a database can be created, should access to the electronic database be limited to certain parties? Furthermore, should personal identifiers on the documents to be displayed, such as Social Security numbers and/or bank accounts, be redacted? Lastly, could the El Paso District Clerk or County Clerk assess a reasonable fee to the public in order to retrieve information?

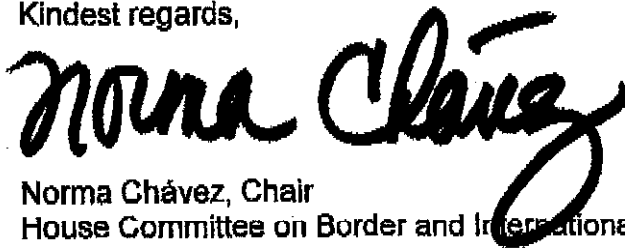


DISTRICT 76



Please feel free to contact my office should you require further information pertaining to this request.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norma Chávez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Norma Chávez, Chair
House Committee on Border and International Affairs

NC/aer:epag