



**KAREN H. MEINARDUS**

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November 27, 2000

OPINION COMMITTEE

RQ-0315-JC

FILE # ML-41766-00

I.D. # 41766

Honorable General John Cornyn  
Attorney General of Texas  
Legal Opinion Division  
Box 12548  
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

*via telecopier and regular mail*

Dear General Cornyn:

On behalf of Wharton County I have been requested to seek an Attorney General's Opinion on whether excess contributions under government code §26.008 to a Constitutional County Judge can be paid out as a one-time salary payment to court personnel under the meaning of §21.006 of the Government Code for "Court Related Purposes."

Facts

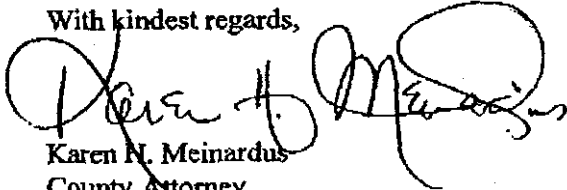
On October 3, 2000 the Comptroller of Public Accounts deposited \$962.42 into Wharton County's bank account in accordance with Government Code #26.008(a) for "excess contributions" received. The maximum supplement of \$10,000.00 per Constitutional County Court Judge has been reached for FY00 under §26.006 of the Government Code. The \$962.42 was designated to be deposited in the County's general funds to be used only for "court-related purposes" for the support of the judiciary as provided by §21.006 of the Government Code.

On November 17, 2000 the Constitutional County Judge directed that the Treasurer pay the \$962.42 to a court employee as a salary supplement.

Since statute does not define "court-related purposes", would that include a one-time salary supplement to court personnel or would that be prohibited as a "bonus?"

Since this will most likely impact other county's use of those funds, your prompt response will be appreciated. The Treasurer is holding the funds in suspense until a determination is received from your office.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen N. Meinardus". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and is positioned above the typed name.

Karen N. Meinardus  
County Attorney  
Wharton County

KHM:ef