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Media Advisory

Please be advised that we just heard from the Texas Attorney General's Office that our Public Information Act Request dated March 24, 2017, has been completed.

In addition to the investigative documents we have already received, District Judge Jack Carter today issued an order making public the ATS speed camera contract portions of the Smith County Commissioners Court Executive Sessions for July 8, July 29, and August 12, 2014.

The information Grassroots America requested was information that would have been made public during the December 2016 trial of former County Judge Joel P. Baker had a plea of no contest agreement not been reached.

Grassroots America will make these documents and videos available as soon as they can be posted for public viewing.

While violation of the Texas Open Meetings Act is not a violent act – no blood is spilled and no one has committed armed robbery or assault – make no mistake, **government officials who act in secret commit a treacherous act – a willful violation of the public trust.** Thankfully, this is well defined and codified in Texas law:

Texas Government Code, Title 5, Open Government; Ethics, Subtitle A, Open Government, Chapter 552, Public Information, Subchapter A. General Provisions, Section 552.001 Policy; Construction (a) reads:

*“Under the fundamental philosophy of the American constitutional form of representative government that adheres to the principle that **government is the servant and not the master of the people**, it is the policy of this state that each person is entitled, unless otherwise expressly provided by law, at all times to complete information about the affairs of government and the official acts of public officials and employees. **The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know.** The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created. The provisions of this chapter shall be liberally construed to implement this policy.”*

Because Grassroots America believes the people of Smith County have a right to know what was discussed in the closed meetings for which a former county judge received a three-count Smith County Grand Jury indictment, we have not ceased to pursue getting the information made public.

We believe this community should demand very high standards for its elected officials. The reasonable expectation that all elected and appointed government officials will obey the rule of law is not negotiable nor debatable. We hope other elected officials will learn from this unfortunate chapter in Smith County history and make every effort not to repeat it.