



*Lynn Fitch*  
**ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
OPINIONS AND POLICY

October 23, 2024

C. Gaines Baker, Esq.  
Attorney, Panola County Board of Supervisors  
136 Public Square, Suite One  
Batesville, Mississippi 38606

Re: Use of Public Law Library Funds to Purchase Metal Detectors

Dear Mr. Baker:

The Office of the Attorney General has received your request for an official opinion.

## OFFICIAL **Background** OPINION

According to your request, Panola County has two judicial districts, and each of the county courthouses therein has a public county law library. Public access for each courthouse/law library is restricted to front door entrance. All persons entering through said entrances must walk through a metal detector. The current metal detectors are antiquated, and the Sheriff has requested that they be replaced. The board of supervisors (“Board”) wishes to purchase new metal detectors from the law library fund to protect all members of the public and ensure the continued safety of the courthouses and law libraries therein. The Panola County Bar Association supports this purchase.

### **Question Presented**

May public law library funds be used to purchase metal detectors for the entrances of county courthouses housing public law libraries?

### **Brief Response**

Mississippi Code Annotated Section 19-7-31 allows a board of supervisors to purchase equipment for public law libraries.

### **Applicable Law and Discussion**

Section 19-7-31 provides, in part:

(1)(a) The board of supervisors of each county in the state shall have power, by an appropriate order or orders on its minutes, to establish and maintain in the county courthouse or other suitable public building adjacent or near thereto, a public county law library under such rules, regulations and supervision as it may from time to time ordain and establish, and to that end, the board may accept gifts, grants, donations or bequests of money, furniture, fixtures, books, documents, maps, plats or other property suitable for that purpose.

(b) The board of supervisors shall have power to exchange or sell duplicate volumes or sets of any such books or furniture, and in case of sale, to invest the proceeds in other suitable books or furniture. *The board may also purchase or lease from time to time additional books, furniture, or equipment for the public law library.*

. . .

(6) The board of supervisors of each county in which there are two (2) judicial districts, in its discretion, may maintain a law library in each judicial district. In those counties the board, in its discretion, may pay from the county general fund or from the special fund authorized in this section all the costs authorized in this section, provided that the board shall not spend in each judicial district less than the amount of the special court costs authorized in this section and collected in each such district.

(emphasis added). Given Section 19-7-31(1), in MS AG Op., *Dunn* at \*1 (Apr. 17, 1998), we concluded that “law library funds may be used to purchase video equipment, as long as such equipment will be available to members of the bar and to the general public as described in your letter.” It is likewise the opinion of this office that if the Board abides by Section 19-7-31(6) and any rules or regulations that it has adopted regarding the law libraries, the Board may use public law library funds to purchase metal detectors, i.e., equipment, for the entrances of county courthouses housing public law libraries.

If this office may be of any further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

LYNN FITCH, ATTORNEY GENERAL

By: */s/ Maggie Kate Bobo*

Maggie Kate Bobo  
Special Assistant Attorney General