

Open-government opinions by Mike Bowers

Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker has steered an activist course in freedom of information since taking office in 1998.

His predecessor, Michael Bowers, also led the Law Department in an aggressive posture in the field of open government.

During Bowers' 16 years as Georgia's Attorney General, the following opinions were written by his department for state officials who requested them.

Bowers lost a 1998 race for the Republican nomination for governor. He now is a partner in the Atlanta law firm of Meadows, Ichter & Trigg.

MICHAEL BOWERS, ATTORNEY GENERAL, 1981 TO 1997

MEETINGS OPENED

1983 Student disciplinary hearings before local boards of education.

1985 Meetings of the Advisory Committee on Area Planning and Development.

1989 Meetings of the Private Industry Council.

Deliberations of the State Ethics Commission after taking evidence.

1995 School board meetings devoted to the airing of grievances about school personnel.

Meetings of county Boards of Tax Assessors and county Boards of Equalization.

MEETINGS CLOSED

1986 Meetings of the Organized Crime Prevention Council.

1991 Meetings of the Subsequent Injuries Trust Fund Board when discussing personnel matters.

RECORDS OPENED

1982 Municipal traffic records.

1983 Official copies of marriage applications kept on file at probate courts.

1984 Dept. of Public Safety information on drivers licenses "that does not violate prohibitions."

1985 Invoices reflecting sales of alcoholic beverages by wholesalers to local retailers furnished to a local government authority to compute local alcohol excise taxes.

1988 Student evaluations of academic courses.

1989 Requests for computer-generated information must be supplied.

Community Development Block Grant information.

Notices of plant closings from private employers to the Georgia Dept. of Labor.

1991 Documents pertaining to inspection of Section 8 housing.

1997 Records of the Fraud and Compliance Division of the state Board of Workers Compensation except where exempted by the act.

RECORDS CLOSED

1981 University of Georgia inter-office communications regarding the evaluation of specific employees.

1985 Investigative reports and intelligence data prepared by the Internal Investigations Unit of the Department of Offender Rehabilitation.

1988 Members of the General Assembly have access to confidential departmental records only if they are public records.

1989 Salaries and expense reimbursements of members of the General Assembly.

1991 Records of the state Board of Workers Compensation related to accidents, injuries and settlements.

1995 Records of real estate appraisals, engineering or feasibility estimates until the property has been acquired.

Source: "Georgia Open Records and Open Meetings Statutes: A Textual Analysis," by Linda L. Harris in partial fulfillment of the requirements for M.A., Georgia State University, 1999. Dr. Gregory C. Lisby was director of the thesis.

*Opinions of the Attorney General since 1994 are online at:
www.ganet.org/ago/gaagopinions.html*