

Texas Court Fight Over Selena TV Show Highlights Estate Law Principles

A planned TV show about the late Tejano singing star Selena has hit a legal barrier, according to a post on the website of **Androvett Legal Media & Marketing**. Her father Abraham Quintanilla Jr. filed a lawsuit in a Texas court to stop the new series based on a book by her husband Chris Perez. Her father argues that only Selena's estate can authorize the TV show and that because her widowed husband made an agreement for a portion of the estate, he can't make his own separate deal for a TV show.

Estate planning lawyer **Aaron Dobbs** of the Sugar Land, Texas, office of **Roberts Markel Weinberg Butler Hailey PC**, says:

"Family settlement agreements, such as the one outlined by Mr. Quintanilla, are highly favored by Texas courts and generally will be upheld and enforced in a court of law. It appears that Selena's family agreed on who may use her name, voice, signature, photograph or likeness in the media, and that authority may lie with the estate or someone other than Mr. Perez. Such a family settlement agreement is a binding contract. So unfortunately for her husband, using Selena's likeness without authorization may result in liability for breach of contract. He could be liable for damages.

"As with an individual's property right in a bank account or house, an individual in Texas has a property right in the use of his or her name, voice, signature, photograph or likeness after death. This property right is transferable by contract or through a last will and testament, trust or other testamentary document. If the property right has not been transferred through one of those means, then Texas law

dictates who inherits the property right. Of course, this does not necessarily stop family members from fighting over the inheritance and use of a deceased person's name, voice, signature, photograph or likeness."