



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL  
GREG ABBOTT

April 22, 2003

Mr. James L. Hall  
Office of the General Counsel  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
P.O. Box 4004  
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2003-2664

Dear Mr. Hall:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 179825.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice (the "board") received a request for a variety of information pertaining to facilities operated by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department"). The requestor also asks the board several questions in his request. We note that the Public Information Act (the "Act") does not require a governmental body to prepare answers to questions posed by a requestor or to perform legal research.<sup>1</sup> See Open Records Decision Nos. 563 at 8 (1990) (considering request for federal and state laws and regulations), 555 at 1-2 (1990) (considering request for answers to fact questions). The request was forwarded to the department for a response. You claim that the board need not comply with the request pursuant to section 552.028 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments.

Section 552.028 states:

- (a) A governmental body is not required to accept or comply with a request for information from:

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is implicit in several provisions of the Act that the Act applies only to information already in existence. See Gov't Code §§ 552.002, .021, .227, .351. The Act does not require a governmental body to prepare new information in response to a request. See Attorney General Opinion H-90 (1973); see also Open Records Decision Nos. 87 (1975), 342 at 3 (1982), 416 at 5 (1984), 452 at 2-3 (1986), 555 at 1-2 (1990), 572 at 1 (1990); *Economic Opportunities Dev. Corp. of San Antonio v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed). A governmental body must only make a good faith effort to relate a request to information which it holds. See Open Records Decision No. 561 at 8 (1990).

(1) an individual who is imprisoned or confined in a correctional facility; or

(2) an agent of that individual, other than that individual's attorney when the attorney is requesting information that is subject to disclosure under this chapter.

(b) This section does not prohibit a governmental body from disclosing to an individual described by Subsection (a)(1), or that individual's agent, information held by the governmental body pertaining to that individual.

(c) In this section, "correctional facility" means a place designated by the law of this state, another state, or the federal government for the confinement of a person arrested for, charged with, or convicted of a criminal offense.

Gov't Code § 552.028. You state that the requestor is acting as the agent for several incarcerated individuals in his role as Director of the Texas Prison Labor Union (the "union"). You indicate that the incarcerated individuals on whose behalf the requestor is making this request are officers and directors of the union. Thus, based on your representations and our review of the information that you have submitted to us, we conclude that the provisions of section 552.028 of the Government Code govern this particular request. Because the individual requesting the information at issue is an agent of an individual or individuals imprisoned in a correctional facility, the Act gives the board the discretion to either comply with this open records request or deny it in its entirety. Because the board wishes to deny the request in its entirety under section 552.028, we conclude that it may do so.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the

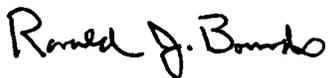
governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Ronald J. Bounds  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

RJB/lmt

Ref: ID# 179825

c: Mr. Dwight L. Rawlinson  
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