



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 29, 2006

Ms. Pamela Smith
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2006-10014

Dear Ms. Smith:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 258078.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received two requests for information related to a fatal traffic accident. You state that you will release the accident report. *See* Transp. Code § 550.065(c)(4) (providing for the release of accident reports to a person who provides two of three required pieces of information). You claim that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

¹We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007 of the Family Code. The relevant language of section 58.007(c) reads as follows:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

- (1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;
- (2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and
- (3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapter B.

Fam. Code. § 58.007. You argue the submitted information is confidential under section 58.007. However, the submitted information does not identify a juvenile suspect or offender. Thus, the submitted information is not confidential under section 58.007 and may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis.

However, we note that the submitted photographs contain Texas motor vehicle record information. Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure information that relates to a driver's license or motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state. Gov't Code § 552.130. Accordingly, pursuant to section 552.130, the department must withhold those portions of the photographs that reveal Texas motor vehicle record information. As you make no other arguments, the remaining submitted information must be released.

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



L. Joseph James
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LJJ/dh

Ref: ID# 258078

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Craig W. Carlson
The Carlson Law Firm
P.O. Box 10520
Killeen, Texas 76547-0520
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Todd A. Kissner
Tekell, Book, Matthews & Limmer, L.L.P.
4300 One Houston Center
1221 McKinney
Houston, Texas 77010
(w/o enclosures)