



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 29, 2010

Ms. M. Ann Montgomery  
Assistant County and District Attorney  
Ellis County and District Attorney's Office  
1201 North Highway 77 Suite 104  
Waxahachie, Texas 75165-7832

OR2010-06189

Dear Ms. Montgomery:

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# 383483.

The Ellis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for information relating to an arrest of a named individual. You claim that some of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body must reasonably explain how and why section 552.108 is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You have marked the information the sheriff seeks to withhold under section 552.108. You state that the marked information is related to a pending criminal case. Based on your representation, we conclude that most of the marked information may be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1). *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536

S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases).

We note, however, that the marked information includes a statutory warning and a notice of suspension. Because copies of those documents are provided to the person who is the subject of the warning and the notice, we find that the release of the statutory warning and the notice of suspension will not interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See* Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Therefore, the statutory warning and the notice of suspension, which we have marked, may not be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1).

You also seek to withhold the statutory warning and the notice of suspension under section 552.103 of the Government Code, which provides in part:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

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*Id.* § 552.103(a), (c). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.103 has the burden of providing relevant facts and documentation sufficient to establish the applicability of this exception to the information that it seeks to withhold. To meet this burden, the governmental body must demonstrate that (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date of its receipt of the request for information and (2) the information at issue is related to the pending or anticipated litigation. *See Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210 (Tex. App.—Houston [1<sup>st</sup> Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.). Both elements of the test must be met in order for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103. *See* Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990).

The purpose of section 552.103 is to enable a governmental body to protect its position in litigation by forcing parties to obtain information relating to litigation through discovery procedures. *See* ORD 551 at 4-5. If the opposing party has seen or had access to information relating to pending or anticipated litigation, through discovery or otherwise, then there is no interest in withholding that information from public disclosure under section 552.103. *See*

Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). You inform us that the statutory warning and the notice of suspension are related to a pending prosecution. Because the statutory warning and the notice of suspension were provided to the defendant in the prosecution, the opposing party in the litigation has already seen that information. We therefore conclude that the statutory warning and the notice of suspension may not be withheld under section 552.103 of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information relating to a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit or a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1)-(2). The sheriff must withhold the Texas driver's license and motor vehicle information you have marked, along with the additional Texas driver's license and motor vehicle information we have marked, under section 552.130.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.147 of the Government Code provides that "[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from" required public disclosure under the Act.<sup>2</sup> *Id.* § 552.147(a). The social security number you have marked may be withheld under section 552.147.

In summary: (1) except for the statutory warning and the notice of suspension, the information you have marked under section 552.108 of the Government Code may be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1); (2) the marked Texas driver's license and motor vehicle information must be withheld under section 552.130 of the Government Code; and (3) the social security number may be withheld under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The rest of the submitted information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public

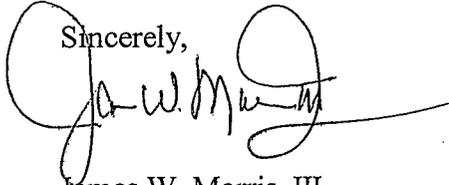
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<sup>1</sup>We note that this office recently issued Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009), a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information, including a Texas driver's license number and a Texas license plate number under section 552.130, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

<sup>2</sup>We note that section 552.147(b) authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.W. Morris, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James W. Morris, III  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JWM/cc

Ref: ID# 383483

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)