



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 10, 2010

Mr. R. Brooks Moore
Assistant General Counsel
Texas A&M University System
200 Technology Way Suite 2079
College Station, Texas 77845-3424

OR2010-06712

Dear Mr. Moore:

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# 383924 (TAMU 10-153).

Texas A&M University (the "university") received a request for law enforcement records relating to a specified case number. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

We first note that the submitted information includes the results of an analysis of a breath specimen. Section 724.018 of the Transportation Code provides that upon the request of the person who has given a specimen at the request of a peace officer, full information concerning the analysis of the specimen must be made available to that person or the person's attorney. In this instance, the requestor is the person who gave the specimen at the request of a peace officer. Although you seek to withhold the results of the analysis of the breath specimen under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code, as a general rule the exceptions to disclosure found in the Act do not apply to information that other statutes make public. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994), 525 at 3 (1989). Therefore, the submitted results of the analysis of the breath specimen must be released to this requestor pursuant to section 724.018 of the Transportation Code.

Next, we address your claim for the rest of the submitted information under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts "[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[.]” *Id.* § 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 inform us, and have provided a letter from the Brazos County Attorney stating, that the remaining information is related to a pending criminal case. Based on your representations and the county attorney’s letter, we conclude that section 552.108(a)(1) is generally applicable to the remaining information. *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 remaining 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.

We also note that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” *Id.* § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88. The university must release basic offense and arrest information, including a detailed description of the offense, even if the information does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report.¹ *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Except for basic information, the statutory warning, and the notice of suspension, the university may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1).

Lastly, we address your claim for 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

¹We note that the submitted information includes an arrested person’s social security number. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code 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. The requestor has a right, however, to his own social security number. *See generally* Gov’t Code § 552.023(b) (governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates, or that person’s representative, solely on grounds that information is considered confidential by privacy principles).

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.

Gov't Code § 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 [1st 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).

We note that 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. Thus, because the statutory warning and the notice of suspension were provided to the defendant in the pending 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.²

In summary: (1) the results of the analysis of the breath specimen must be released to this requestor pursuant to section 724.018 of the Transportation Code; (2) except for the statutory warning, the notice of suspension, and the basic offense and arrest information that must be released under section 552.108(c), the university may withhold the rest of the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code; and (3) the statutory

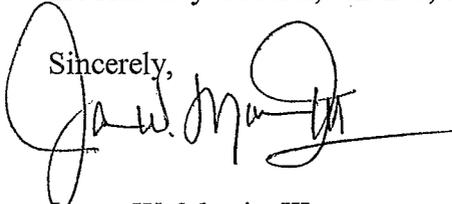
²We also note that section 552.103 does not generally except from disclosure the same basic information that must be released under section 552.108(c). *See* Open Records Decision No. 597 (1991).

warning and the notice of suspension may not be withheld under section 552.103 of the Government Code and must be released.³

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, 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 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,



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

JWM/rl

Ref: ID# 384789

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

³We note that the statutory warning and the notice of suspension contain the requestor's Texas driver's license number, which the university would ordinarily be required to withhold under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Because section 552.130 protects personal privacy, the requestor has a special right of access to his own Texas driver's license number under section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987). We also 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 without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision, including a Texas driver's license number under section 552.130. Thus, should the university receive another request for these same records from a requestor other than one with a right of access under section 552.023, the university is authorized to withhold this requestor's Texas driver's license number under section 552.130 without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.