



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 9, 2011

Ms. P. Armstrong
Assistant City Attorney
Criminal Law and Police Station
City of Dallas
1400 South Lamar
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2011-06371

Dear Ms. Armstrong:

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# 421589 (ORR# 2011-2861).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You inform us that a portion of the requested information was the subject of a previous request for information, in response to which this office issued Open Records Letter No. 2011-05287 (2011). In that ruling, we found, with the exception of basic information, the department the information at issue under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. We conclude that, as we have no indication that the law, facts, and circumstances on which the prior ruling was based have changed, the department may continue to rely on that ruling as a previous determination and withhold or release the same information in accordance with Open Records Letter No. 2011-05287.¹ See Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (so long as law, facts, and circumstances on which prior ruling was based have not changed, first type of previous determination exists where requested information is precisely same information as was addressed in a prior attorney general ruling, ruling is addressed to same governmental body, and ruling concludes that information is or is not excepted from disclosure).

¹As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your submitted arguments against disclosure of the information at issue in the previous ruling.

With respect to the remaining information at issue, which was not responsive to the previous request, you acknowledge the department failed to meet the deadlines prescribed by section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting an open records decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b). Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). A compelling reason exists when third-party interests are at stake or when information is confidential by law. Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977). Although you raise section 552.108 of the Government Code, this section is a discretionary exception that protects a governmental body's interests and may be waived. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). However, the interests of a governmental body other than the one that failed to comply with section 552.301 can provide a compelling reason for non-disclosure under section 552.302. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 586 (1991), 469 (1987). You inform us, and provide correspondence from the Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") confirming, the district attorney asserts an interest in the submitted information. Therefore, we will consider whether the department may withhold the submitted information on behalf of the district attorney under section 552.108. We will also consider whether a portion of the submitted information is excepted under section 552.130 of the Government Code, which can provide a compelling reason for non-disclosure.

Section 552.108(a)(1) 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). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state, and the correspondence from the district attorney also states, that the information you have marked relates to an pending criminal prosecution and release of the information would interfere with the prosecution. Based upon your representations, the submitted correspondence, and our review, we conclude that the release of the marked information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975)(court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Accordingly, the department may withhold the marked information on behalf of the district attorney under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure "information [that] relates to . . . a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state [.]” Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1). Upon review, we find that the department must withhold the Texas driver's license number and driver's license class you have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.²

In summary, the department may continue to rely on Open Records Letter No. 2011-05287 as a previous determination and withhold the information subject to that ruling in accordance therewith. The department may withhold the information you have marked on behalf of the district attorney under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information 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,



Laura Ream Lemus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LRL/tf

²We note this office issued Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009), a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information, including Texas driver's license numbers under section 552.130 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

³We note the remaining information contains a 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. Gov't Code § 552.147.

Ref: ID# 421589

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)