



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

May 23, 2011

Ms. Susan Fillion  
Assistant County Attorney  
Harris County Attorney's Office  
1019 Congress, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2011-07262

Dear Ms. Fillion:

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# 422830 (C.A. File Number 11PIA0142).

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (the "institute") received two requests for a specified autopsy report. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also considered comments submitted by one of the requestors. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

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). Section 552.108 may be invoked by the proper custodian of information relating to a pending investigation or prosecution of criminal conduct. *See* Open Records Decision No. 474 at 4-5 (1987). Where a non-law enforcement agency has custody of information that would otherwise qualify for exception under section 552.108 as information relating to the pending case of a law enforcement agency, the custodian of the records may withhold the information

if it provides this office with a demonstration that the information relates to the pending case and a representation from the law enforcement agency that it wishes to have the information withheld. You inform us, and have provided an affidavit stating, that the Harris County Sheriff's Office objects to disclosure of the submitted information because its release would interfere with an ongoing criminal investigation. Based on your representation and the submitted affidavit, we conclude that the institute may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14<sup>th</sup> 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).

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 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/em

Ref: ID# 422830

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)