



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 15, 2012

Mr. Tillman S. Roots
Assistant District Attorney
Comal County Criminal District Attorney
150 North Seguin, Suite 307
New Braunfels, Texas 78130

OR2012-18452

Dear Mr. Roots:

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# 475489 (Your File No. 12-OR-109).

The Comal County Criminal District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") received a request for four categories of information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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). A governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the information at issue relates to a pending prosecution. Based on this representation, we find release of the submitted 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). We note, however, the information at issue includes a DIC-24 statutory warning and a DIC-25 notice of suspension. The arrestee was provided copies of these forms. You have not explained

how releasing this information, which has already been seen by the arrestee, would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See* Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Accordingly, the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms may not be withheld under section 552.108.

Additionally, 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 186-187; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Accordingly, with the exception of the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms and basic information, the district attorney's office may withhold the remaining submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1).

You also raise section 552.103 of the Government Code, which provides in relevant 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.

Id. § 552.103(a), (c). The purpose of section 552.103 is to protect the litigation interests of governmental bodies that are parties to the litigation at issue. *See id.* § 552.103(a); Open Records Decision No. 638 at 2 (1996) (section 552.103 only protects the litigation interests of the governmental body claiming the exception). A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show section 552.103(a) is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

You inform us the information at issue relates to a pending criminal prosecution. We note, however, basic information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle* is generally not excepted from public disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. Open Records

Decision No. 597 (1991). We further note the purpose of section 552.103 is to enable a governmental body to protect its position in litigation by forcing parties to obtain information that is related to litigation through discovery procedures. See ORD 551 at 4-5. Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to the opposing party in the litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a), and it must be disclosed. The submitted DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms were provided to the individual who was cited; thus, the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms were inevitably seen by the opposing party to the litigation. Therefore, the district attorney's office may not withhold the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms or the basic information under section 552.103.

We note the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms contain the arrestee's driver's license number. Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license or driver's license is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1). The district attorney's office must withhold the arrestee's driver's license number in the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, except for the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms and the basic information, the district attorney's office may withhold the information at issue under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing the DIC-24 and DIC-25 forms, the district attorney's office must withhold the arrestee's driver's license number under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

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,



Ana Carolina Vieira
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ACV/ag

Ref: ID# 475489

Enc. Submitted documents

**c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)**