



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 25, 2014

Ms. Savannah Gonzalez
Assistant District Attorney
Hidalgo County
100 North Closner, Room 303
Edinburg, Texas 78539

OR2014-06917

Dear Ms. Gonzalez:

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# 520873 (Hidalgo Reference No. 2014-0008-DA).

The Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information relating to a specified automobile accident. You state you have released some information to the requestor. You claim the remaining requested 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.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹

¹Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in subsection 552.130(a) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e).

Next, we note some of the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a) provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

...

(17) information that is also contained in a public court record[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). The submitted information includes court-filed documents that are subject to section 552.022(a)(17). You seek to withhold this information, which we have marked, under section 552.108 of the Government Code. However, section 552.108 is a discretionary exception that protects a governmental body's interests and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). Therefore, the marked court documents may not be withheld under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We will, however, consider your argument under section 552.108 for the submitted information not subject to section 552.022(a)(17).

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.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that release of the remaining information will interfere with a pending criminal investigation. Based on this representation, we conclude that section 552.108(a)(1) is 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) (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).

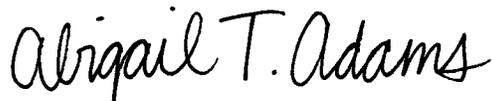
However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic “front-page” information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-187; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, the sheriff's office may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, the sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must release the court-filed documents we have marked under section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. Finally, with the exception of basic information, the sheriff's office may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Abigail T. Adams
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ATA/eb

Ref: ID# 520873

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)