



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 20, 2016

Mr. William S. Helfand  
Counsel for Sabine River Authority of Texas  
Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White, Williams & Aughtry, P.P.C.  
1200 Smith Street, Suite 1400  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2016-16343

Dear Mr. Helfand:

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# 619363.

The Sabine River Authority of Texas (the "authority"), which you represent, received a request for correspondence concerning a specified event during a specified time period. You state the authority has released some information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.107, 552.117, and 552.137 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>2</sup>

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part:

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<sup>1</sup>Although you failed to timely raise sections 552.117 and 552.137 of the Government Code, these exceptions constitute compelling reasons to withhold information, and we will consider your arguments under these exceptions. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301, .302.

<sup>2</sup>We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

(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.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The governmental body claiming section 552.103 has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents sufficient to establish the applicability of section 552.103 to the information it seeks to withhold. To meet this burden, the governmental body must demonstrate: (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 that litigation. *See Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *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).*

You state prior to the authority's receipt of the instant request, a lawsuit styled Cause No. B160137-C, *Perry Bonin v. Sabine River Authority of Texas*, was filed and is currently pending against the authority in the 163rd District Court of Orange County, Texas. Therefore, we agree litigation was pending on the date the authority received the present request for information. You also state the submitted information "concerns matters directly related to the subject matter of the pending lawsuit." Based on your representations and our review, we find the information at issue is related to the pending litigation. Therefore, we conclude the authority may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103 of the Government Code.<sup>3</sup>

Generally, however, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982)*. Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to all parties to the pending litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a) and must be disclosed. Further, the applicability of

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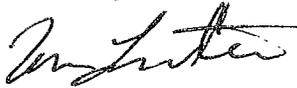
<sup>3</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded. *See* Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

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](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,



Ian Lancaster  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

IML/dls

Ref: ID# 619363

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)