



Office of the Attorney General  
State of Texas

DAN MORALES  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 13, 1996

Mr. David B. Casas  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of San Antonio  
P.O. Box 839966  
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR96-2394

Dear Mr. Casas:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 102610.

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for "a copy of [the requestor's] complaint file to include all details and documents involved." You assert that the requested information is excepted from required public disclosure pursuant to sections 552.101 and 552.103 of the Government Code.

When asserting section 552.103(a), a governmental body must establish that the requested information relates to pending or reasonably anticipated litigation.<sup>1</sup> Thus, under section 552.103(a) a governmental body's burden is two-pronged. The governmental body must establish that (1) litigation is either pending or reasonably anticipated and that (2) the requested information relates to that litigation. *See 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 (1990) at 4.

To establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office "concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation may ensue is more than mere conjecture." Open Records Decision No. 452 (1986) at 4. You state that

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<sup>1</sup>Section 552.103(a) excepts from required public disclosure information:

(1) relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature or settlement negotiations, 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; and

(2) that the attorney general or the attorney of the political subdivision has determined should be withheld from public inspection.

litigation is reasonably anticipated because the attorney for the requestor has written the city threatening a lawsuit if certain demands are not met. You also state that this letter "constitutes notice . . . as required by Section 150 of the City Charter." We believe that you have established that litigation is realistically contemplated. See Open Records Decision No. 638 (1996) (fact that governmental body received claim letter that it represents to this office to be in compliance with notice requirements of Texas Tort Claims Act, Civ. Prac. & Rem. Code ch. 101, or applicable municipal ordinance shows that litigation is reasonably anticipated). Having reviewed the records at issue, we agree that this information relates to the anticipated litigation. Consequently, the city may withhold the requested information under section 552.103 of the Government Code.

In reaching this conclusion, however, we assume that the opposing party to the anticipated litigation has not previously had access to the records at issue; absent special circumstances, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation, *e.g.*, through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). If the opposing party in the anticipated litigation has seen or had access to any of the information in these records, there would be no justification for now withholding that information from the requestor pursuant to section 552.103(a). We also note that the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).<sup>2</sup>

We are resolving this matter with an informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. This ruling is limited to the particular records at issue under the facts presented to us in this request and may not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records. If you have questions about this ruling, please contact our office.

Yours very truly,



Karen E. Hattaway  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KEH/ch

Ref: ID# 102610

Enclosures: Submitted documents

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<sup>2</sup>Although we have resolved this matter under section 552.103, we note that some of the information at issue is confidential by law and, therefore, must be withheld pursuant to section 552.101. See *Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.--El Paso 1992, writ denied).