



April 25, 2000

Mr. Thomas F. Keever
Assistant District Attorney
County of Denton
P.O. Box 2850
Denton, Texas 76202

OR2000-1603

Dear Mr. Keever:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 134455.

The Honorable Kirk Wilson, County Judge of Denton County, (the "county judge") received a request for all information received or generated by his office on a specific date. You have submitted as responsive to the request one e-mail communication. You claim that this e-mail is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the submitted document. We assume that you have released any additional responsive information to the requestor. *See Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302.*

Section 552.107(1) excepts information that an attorney cannot disclose because of a duty to his client. In Open Records Decision No. 574 (1990), this office concluded that section 552.107 excepts from public disclosure only "privileged information," that is, information that reflects either confidential communications from the client to the attorney or the attorney's legal advice or opinions; it does not apply to all client information held by a governmental body's attorney. *Id.* at 5. When communications from attorney to client do not reveal the client's communications to the attorney, section 552.107 protects them only to the extent that such communications reveal the attorney's legal opinion or advice. *Id.* at 3. Section 552.107(1) does not protect purely factual information. *Id.* After reviewing your argument and the submitted document, we find that the submitted document reveals an attorney's legal opinion or advice. Accordingly, the county judge may withhold the submitted document in its entirety based on section 552.107(1).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Kathryn S. Knechtel
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KSK/ljp

Ref: ID# 134455

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Charles Siderius
Staff Writer
Denton Publishing Company
P.O. Box 369
Denton, Texas 76201
(w/o enclosures)