OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL · STATE OF TEXAS
JOHN CORNYN

June 13, 2000

Ms. Dylbia L. Jefferies Vega
Cameron County Commissioners Court
Civil Legal Division
964 E. Harrison Street
Brownsville, Texas 78520

OR2000-2283

Dear Ms. Vega:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 137581.

The Cameron County Judge's Office (the "judge's office") received a request for the detailed billing statements for the mobile telephone of a county commissioner. You claim that you have given the requestor the billing statements in possession of the county auditor. You ask this office whether the judge's office must request the detailed billing statements from the telephone company to comply with the request.

The Public Information Act (the "Act") does not ordinarily require a governmental body to obtain information not in its possession. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 558 (1990), 518 (1989), 499 (1988). Further, the Act does not require a governmental body to obtain information from another entity, so long as the entity does not hold the information on behalf of the governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 534 (1989). Accordingly, we conclude that the judge's office does not need to request the billing statements from the telephone company to comply with the request.

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

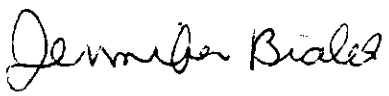
full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit 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,



Jennifer Bialek
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JHB/ljp

Ref: ID# 137581

cc: Ms. Emma Perez-Trevino
The Brownsville Herald
1135 E. Van Buren
Brownsville, Texas 78520