



May 11, 2001

Mr. Dennis P. Duffy  
General Counsel  
University of Houston  
E. Cullen Building, Room 212  
Houston, Texas 77204-2162

OR2001-1932

Dear Mr. Duffy:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 147103.

The University of Houston (the "university") received a request for a specified letter sent by the university's general counsel to university faculty members. The requestor also asks a factual question. You indicate that you do not have documents which would address this question. Although a governmental body must make a good faith effort to relate a request to information which it holds, the Public Information Act does not require a governmental body to answer factual questions or to obtain information not in its possession. Open Records Decision Nos. 555 (1990), 561 (1990), 558 (1990). You claim that the requested letter is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.107 provides in relevant part that information is excepted from required public disclosure if

it is information that the attorney general or an attorney of a political subdivision is prohibited from disclosing because of a duty to the client under the Texas Rules of Evidence, the Texas Rules of Criminal Evidence, or the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct.

Gov't Code § 552.107(1). This section excepts from disclosure only factual information or requests for legal advice communicated by the client to the attorney and legal advice or opinion rendered by the attorney to the client or to an associated attorney in the course of rendering legal services to the client. Open Records Decision No. 574 (1990). Based on our review of the submitted letter we conclude that this document is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107(1). You may therefore withhold the responsive letter.

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).

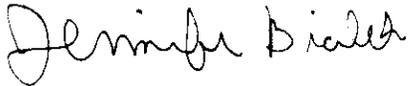
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following 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).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

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 H. Bialek  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JHB/MJB/er

Ref: ID# 147103

Encl: Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Stephen Barth  
University of Houston  
Conrad N. Hilton  
College of Hotel and Restaurant Management  
Houston, Texas 77204-3902  
(w/o enclosures)