



May 24, 2001

Mr. J. Robert Giddings
The University of Texas System
Office of the General Counsel
201 West Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2981

OR2001-2153

Dear Mr. Giddings:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 146987.

The University of Texas System (“UTS”) received five requests for information concerning the “Justice For All” exhibit erected in front of the Gregory Gymnasium in February 2001. In addition, one of the requestors, Ms. Jayson, seeks information concerning an incident involving U.T. faculty member Mia Carter. You claim that the requested information pertaining to the “Justice For All” exhibit is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.026, 552.101, 552.107, 552.108, 552.111, and 552.114 of the Government Code, and that the additional information requested by Ms. Jayson is also excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We first address the request for information concerning the “Justice For All” exhibit. You assert “[t]he University of Texas at Austin police department is a law enforcement agency that employs commissioned peace officers pursuant to authority granted by Section 51.203, *Education Code*,” and that the documents contained within the police files are protected from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108(a)(2) excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate that the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. After reviewing

your arguments and all of the submitted information, we agree that incident report number 011489 pertains to a case that has concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Therefore, UTS may withhold the report under section 552.108(a)(2).

However, section 552.108 is inapplicable to basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). We believe such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App. --Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, with the exception of the basic front page offense and arrest information, including the detailed description of the offense, you may withhold the requested information from disclosure based on section 552.108(a)(2). We note that you have the discretion to release all or part of the remaining information that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code § 552.007.

Next, you state some of the responsive documents contain personally identifiable information regarding specific students at the University of Texas at Austin and therefore should be protected as educational records of a student under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and sections 552.026, 552.101, and 552.114 of the Government Code. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 ("FERPA") provides that no federal funds will be made available under any applicable program to an educational agency or institution that releases personally identifiable information (other than directory information) contained in a student's education records to anyone but certain enumerated federal, state, and local officials and institutions, unless otherwise authorized by the student's parent. *See* 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1). "Education records" means those records that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a person acting for such agency or institution. *Id.* § 1232g(a)(4)(A). This office generally applies the same analysis under section 552.114 and FERPA. Open Records Decision No. 539 (1990).

Section 552.114 excepts from disclosure student records at an educational institution funded completely or in part by state revenue. Section 552.026 provides as follows:

This chapter does not require the release of information contained in education records of an educational agency or institution, except in conformity with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, Sec. 513, Pub. L. No. 93-380, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1232g.

In Open Records Decision No. 634 (1995), this office concluded that (1) an educational agency or institution may withhold from public disclosure information that is protected by FERPA and excepted from required public disclosure by sections 552.026 and 552.101 without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision as to those exceptions, and (2) an educational agency or institution that is state-funded may withhold from public disclosure information that is excepted from required public disclosure by section 552.114

as a "student record," insofar as the "student record" is protected by FERPA, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision as to that exception.

Information must be withheld from required public disclosure under FERPA only to the extent "reasonable and necessary to avoid personally identifying a particular student." See Open Records Decision Nos. 332 (1982), 206 (1978). We have marked the types of information that may reveal or tend to reveal information about a student that must be withheld pursuant to section 552.114. All other information must be released.

Next, you assert the documents contained within Attachment "E" and Tabs 4 and 5 are correspondence to and from attorneys representing UTS and The University of Texas at Austin and should be protected from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.107, and 552.111 of the Government Code. In addition, you state copies of correspondence between the Office of General Counsel and the attorney representing the outside organization Justice For All, Inc., are not privileged communication and will be, with the exception of handwritten comments contained thereon, released to the requestor. 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. Open Records Decision No. 574 at 5 (1990). Section 552.107(1) does not except purely factual information from disclosure. *Id.* Section 552.107(1) does not except from disclosure factual recounting of events or the documentation of calls made, meetings attended, and memos sent. *Id.* at 5. We determine the applicability of section 552.107(1) on a case-by-case basis. We agree that some of the submitted information reflects client confidences and attorney's legal advice or opinions that you may withhold under section 552.107. We have marked the information that is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 and may be withheld.

Next, we address your section 552.111 claim for the interagency or intraagency memoranda. Section 552.111 excepts from disclosure "an interagency or intraagency memorandum or letter that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the agency." In Open Records Decision No. 615 (1993), this office reexamined the predecessor to the section 552.111 exception in light of the decision in *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ), and held that section 552.111 excepts only those internal communications consisting of advice, recommendations, opinions, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *City of Garland v. Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351, 364 (Tex. 2000); *Arlington Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Texas Attorney Gen.*, 37 S.W.3d 152 (Tex. App.--Austin 2001, no pet.). An agency's policymaking functions do not encompass internal administrative or personnel matters; disclosure of information relating to such matters will not inhibit free discussion among agency personnel as to policy issues. Open Records Decision No. 615 at 5-6 (1993).

Additionally, section 552.111 does not generally except from disclosure purely factual information that is severable from the opinion portions of internal memoranda. *Arlington Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 37 S.W.3d at 160; Open Records Decision No. 615 at 4-5 (1993). After reviewing the submitted records, we conclude you may withhold some of the information under section 552.111. We have marked the documents accordingly. UTS must release the remainder of the information.

Second, we address Ms. Jayson's request for information concerning the incident involving U.T. faculty member Mia Carter. You state that several of the responsive additional documents fall within the previous exceptions discussed above and are also excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. Section 552.103 provides as follows:

(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). UTS has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *University of Tex. Law Sch. v. Texas Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.--Austin 1997, no pet.); *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 at 4 (1990). UTS must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under 552.103(a).

To establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated, the 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 at 4 (1986). Concrete evidence to support a claim that litigation is reasonably anticipated may include, for example, the governmental body's receipt of a letter containing a specific threat to sue the governmental

body from an attorney for a potential opposing party.¹ Open Records Decision No. 555 (1990); *see* Open Records Decision No. 518 at 5 (1989) (litigation must be “realistically contemplated”). On the other hand, this office has determined that if an individual publicly threatens to bring suit against a governmental body, but does not actually take objective steps toward filing suit, litigation is not reasonably anticipated. *See* Open Records Decision No. 331 (1982). Further, the fact that a potential opposing party has hired an attorney who makes a request for information does not establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision No. 361 (1983). You state litigation is reasonably anticipated as Ms. Mia Carter arranged for a March 23, 2001, meeting in the home of her attorney to discuss police brutality, the use of force against protesting faculty and students, and gender and sexual harassment. After reviewing your arguments and the submitted documents, we conclude that litigation is not reasonably anticipated in this instance, and therefore, with the exception of those documents so marked, you may not withhold information that relates to the incident involving Ms. Mia Carter under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code. The documents must be released to Ms. Jayson.

In summary, UTS may, with the exception of basic information, withhold incident report number 011489 under section 552.108(a)(2); information that may reveal or tend to reveal information about a student must be withheld under FERPA and section 552.114; an attorney’s legal advice or opinions and client confidences may be withheld under section 552.107(1); and interagency or intraagency memoranda, except matters pertaining to personnel, may be withheld under section 552.111. Information that relates to the incident involving Ms. Mia Carter may not be withheld under section 552.103(a) and must be released to Ms. Jayson.

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

¹ In addition, this office has concluded that litigation was reasonably anticipated when the potential opposing party took the following objective steps toward litigation: filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *see* Open Records Decision No. 336 (1982); hired an attorney who made a demand for disputed payments and threatened to sue if the payments were not made promptly, *see* Open Records Decision No. 346 (1982); and threatened to sue on several occasions and hired an attorney, *see* Open Records Decision No. 288 (1981).

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).

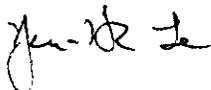
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following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



Yen-Ha Le
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

YHL/DBF/seg

Ref: ID# 146987

Encl: Marked documents

cc: Mr. Bill Medaille, Researcher
Texans for Public Justice
609 West 18th Street, Suite E
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Chris Womack
The Texas Observer
307 West Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Ryan D. Pittman
The Daily Texan
P.O. Box D
Austin, Texas 78713-8904
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Linda Ferreira-Buckley
Office of Dean, College of Liberal Arts
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78713

Ms. Sharon Jayson
Austin American-Statesman
P.O. Box 670
Austin, Texas 78767-0670