OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

March 30, 2004

Ms. Julie Joe
Assistant County Attorney
Travis County
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767

OR2004-2479

Dear Ms. Joe:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 198293.

The Travis County Attorney's Office (the "county attorney") received a request for "a copy of the front or front inside of the prosecutor's file indicating any and all plea bargains offered to defense counsel" in Cause No. 506,876. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code states in pertinent part:

> (b) An internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:
>
> ....
>
> (3) the internal record or notation:
>
> (A) is prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation; or

> (B) reflects the mental impressions or legal reasoning of an attorney representing the state.

Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(3). You state that the submitted information consists of internal records and notations that were prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation in the requested case. Based on your representations and our review of the information at issue, we conclude that the county attorney may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(b)(3).

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 Dep't of Pub. 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 Texas Building and Procurement 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,

Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/jh

Ref: ID# 198293
Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Keith S. Hampton
Attorney at Law
1103 Nueces Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)