



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 30, 2004

Ms. Jana A. Jones
District Attorney
Jack & Wise Counties
271st Judicial District
Wise County Courthouse, Suite 200
Decatur, Texas 76234

OR2004-10057

Dear Ms. Jones:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 213881.

The Wise County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") received a request for information pertaining to a specified arrest. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and have reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted information includes an arrest warrant. The 78th Legislature has amended article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to add language providing:

The arrest warrant, and any affidavit presented to the magistrate in support of the issuance of the warrant, is public information, and beginning immediately when the warrant is executed the magistrate's clerk shall make a copy of the warrant and the affidavit available for public inspection in the

¹ We note that although the district attorney did not claim that any portion of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 within ten business days of its receipt of the instant request for information, section 552.101 constitutes a compelling reason to withhold information from disclosure. Accordingly, we will address your claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301, .302.

clerk's office during normal business hours. A person may request the clerk to provide copies of the warrant and affidavit on payment of the cost of providing the copies.

Crim. Proc. Code art. 15.26. Thus, the arrest warrant that we have marked is made public under article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. As a general rule, the exceptions to disclosure found in the Public Information Act (the "Act") do not apply to information that is made public by other statutes. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994), 525 at 3 (1989). Accordingly, we conclude that the marked arrest warrant must be released to the requestor pursuant to article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

We also note that the remaining submitted information includes a complaint. Article 15.04 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides that "[t]he affidavit made before the magistrate or district or county attorney is called a 'complaint' if it charges the commission of an offense." Crim. Proc. Code art. 15.04. Case law indicates that a complaint can support the issuance of an arrest warrant. *See Janecka v. State*, 739 S.W.2d 813, 822-23 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987); *see also Villegas v. State*, 791 S.W.2d 226, 235 (Tex. App.—Corpus Christi 1990, pet. ref'd); *Borsari v. State*, 919 S.W.2d 913, 918 (Tex. App.—Houston [14 Dist.] 1996, pet. ref'd) (discussing well-established principle that complaint in support of arrest warrant need not contain same particularity required of indictment). The complaint that we have marked appears to have been presented to a magistrate in support of the issuance of an arrest warrant. Accordingly, we conclude that the district attorney must release the marked complaint to the requestor pursuant to article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

With regard to the remaining submitted information, we note that section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information that is protected from disclosure by other statutes. Section 261.201 of the Family Code provides in part:

(a) The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

(1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and

(2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Because the remaining submitted information consists of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261, it is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated that the district attorney has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. We, therefore, assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, we conclude that the district attorney must withhold the remaining submitted information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.² See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (applying predecessor statute).

In summary, the district attorney must release the marked arrest warrant and complaint pursuant to article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The district attorney must withhold the remaining submitted information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.

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).

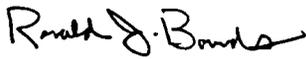
² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining claimed exception to disclosure.

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,



Ronald J. Bounds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RJB/krl

Ref: ID# 213881

Enc. Marked documents

c: Ms. Sonia Santoya
Litigation Support Coordinator
Engenera Litigation Support Services, Inc.
11118 Wurzbach, Suite 201
San Antonio, Texas 78230
(w/o enclosures)