



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 30, 2005

Mr. Leslie R. Sweet
Legal Advisor
Dallas County Sheriff's Department
133 North Industrial Blvd., LB-31
Dallas, Texas 75207-4313

OR2005-10717

Dear Mr. Sweet:

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# 237125.

The Dallas County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for "all documents related to the HUD Investigation that were subpoenaed by the [sheriff] from the FBI." You claim that the submitted 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.¹

We initially note that some of the submitted information appears to have been obtained pursuant to a grand jury subpoena. The judiciary is expressly excluded from the requirements of the Act. *See* Gov't Code § 552.003(1)(B). This office has determined that a grand jury, for purposes of the Act, is a part of the judiciary and therefore not subject to the Act. *See* Open Records Decision No. 411 (1984). Further, records kept by another person or entity acting as an agent for a grand jury are considered to be records in the constructive possession of the grand jury and therefore are not subject to the Act. *See* Open Records Decisions Nos. 513 (1988), 411 (1984), 398 (1983); *but see* Open Records Decision No. 513 at 4 (1988) (defining limits of judiciary exclusion). The fact that information collected or prepared by another person or entity is submitted to the grand jury does not necessarily mean that such information is in the grand jury's constructive possession when the same information is also held in the other person's or entity's own capacity. Information held by

¹We assume that the sample of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

another person or entity but not produced at the direction of the grand jury may well be protected under one of the Act's specific exceptions to disclosure, but such information is not excluded from the reach of the Act by the judiciary exclusion. *See* Open Records Decision No. 513 (1988). Therefore, to the extent that the submitted information is held by the sheriff as an agent of the grand jury, such information is in the grand jury's constructive possession and is not subject to disclosure under the Act. The rest of this decision is not applicable to such information. To the extent that the submitted information is not held by the sheriff as an agent of the grand jury, so as to be subject to the Act, we consider your exception to disclosure.

The sheriff seeks to withhold the remainder of the submitted information under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108 excepts from public disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication.[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). Section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable only if the information in question relates to a concluded case that did not result in a conviction or a deferred adjudication. You state that the submitted information relates to a closed investigation that did not result in a conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on your representations and our review of the information in question, we agree that the department may withhold the remainder of the submitted information pursuant to section 552.108(a)(2).

In summary, to the extent that the submitted information is held by the sheriff as an agent of the grand jury, such information is in the grand jury's constructive possession and is not subject to disclosure under the Act. The sheriff may withhold the remainder of the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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,



Ramsey A. Abarca
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RAA/krl

Ref: ID# 237125

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Paul Adrian
KDFW Fox 4 Television
400 N. Griffin Street
Dallas, Texas 75202
(w/o enclosures)