



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 18, 2007

Mr. Robert Green
Open Records Specialist
Baytown Police Department
3200 North Main Street
Baytown, Texas 77521

OR2007-07694

Dear Mr. Green:

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# 285756.

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a specified incident. You claim that some of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You claim that the information you have highlighted in orange is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime [if] release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." A governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(a)(1), (b)(1), 552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the submitted information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based on this representation, we conclude that the release of the information highlighted in orange would

interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Therefore, the department may withhold the orange-highlighted information under section 552.108(a)(1).

You claim that the information you have highlighted in pink is excepted from disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code. This section excepts from disclosure information that relates to a Texas driver's license or motor vehicle title or registration. Gov't Code § 552.130. We note that the purpose of section 552.130 is to protect the privacy interests of individuals. Since the right of privacy lapses at death, Texas motor vehicle record information that pertains to a deceased individual may not be withheld under section 552.130. *See Moore v. Charles B. Pierce Film Enterprises, Inc.*, 589 S.W.2d 489, 491 (Tex. Civ. App.—Texarkana 1979, *writ ref'd n.r.e.*) (Texas does not recognize relational or derivative right of privacy); *see also* Attorney General Opinions JM-229 (1984); H-917 (1976); Open Records Decision No. 272 at 1 (1981). Therefore, other than Texas motor vehicle that pertains to a deceased individual, the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have highlighted in pink under section 552.130.

Finally, you claim that the social security numbers you have highlighted in green are excepted from disclosure under section 552.147 of the Government Code. This section provides that “[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from” required public disclosure under the Act. Therefore, the department may withhold the green-highlighted social security numbers that pertain to living persons under section 552.147.¹

To conclude, the department may withhold the orange-highlighted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. Other than the Texas motor vehicle record information of a deceased individual, the department must withhold the pink-highlighted information under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department may withhold the green-highlighted social security numbers under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.

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

¹We note that section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

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).

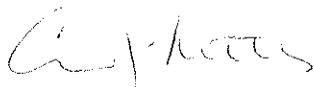
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/mcf

Ref: ID# 285756

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Michael Hickey
934 Edwards Street
Copperas Cove, Texas 76522
(w/o enclosures)