



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

July 26, 2007

Ms. Shelly O'Brien Yeatts  
Assistant District Attorney  
Dallas County  
Frank Crowley Courts Building  
133 North Industrial Boulevard, LB-19  
Dallas, Texas 75207-4399

OR2007-09503

Dear Ms. Yeatts:

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# 284822.

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") received a request for the file regarding a specific incident, all information regarding a named person, and a specific portion of a grand jury testimony. You state that information regarding the specific incident does not exist.<sup>1</sup> You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.108, and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Act does not require a governmental body to release information that did not exist when a request for information was received, create information responsive information, or obtain information that is not held by or on behalf of the city. *See Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266, 267-68 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision No. 452 at 3 (1986).

<sup>2</sup>We assume that the representative 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.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if (1) the information contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) the information is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be demonstrated. *Id.* at 681-82. A compilation of an individual’s criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. United States Dep’t of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (when considering prong regarding individual’s privacy interest, court recognized distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of information and noted that individual has significant privacy interest in compilation of one’s criminal history). Furthermore, we find that a compilation of a private citizen’s criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public. Therefore, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.<sup>3</sup>

You claim that the submitted grand jury testimony is excepted from public disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with article 20.02(a) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. Article 20.02(a) provides that “[t]he proceedings of the grand jury shall be secret.” The submitted transcript of the testimony of a grand jury witness is part of the record of the grand jury proceeding.<sup>4</sup> *See Stern v. State*, 869 S.W. 2d 614 at 621 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1994, writ denied); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 398

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<sup>3</sup>As this ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments.

<sup>4</sup>Release of such information is governed by article 20.02(c) of this code, which provides:

[a] disclosure of a record made under Article 20.012, a disclosure of a typewritten transcription of that record, or a disclosure otherwise prohibited by Subsection (b) or Article 20.16 may be made by the attorney representing the state in performing the attorney’s duties to a grand juror serving on the grand jury before whom the record was made, another grand jury, a law enforcement agency, or a prosecuting attorney, as permitted by the attorney representing the state and determined by the attorney as necessary to assist the attorney in the performance of the attorney’s duties. The attorney representing the state shall warn any person the attorney authorizes to receive information under this subsection of the person’s duty to maintain the secrecy of the information. Any person who receives information under this subsection and discloses the information for purposes other than those permitted by this subsection is subject to punishment for contempt in the same manner as persons who violate Subsection (b).

(1983). Therefore, we agree that the submitted grand jury testimony, which we have marked, is confidential under article 20.02(a) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code. See Open Records Decision No. 513 at 4.

In summary, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the submitted grand jury testimony, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with article 20.02(a) of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JNT', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jaclyn N. Thompson  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JNT/ma

Ref: ID# 284822

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Lydia Brandt  
P.O. Box 850843  
Richardson, Texas 75085-0843  
(w/o enclosures)