



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 7, 2008

Ms. Zindia Thomas  
Assistant Attorney General  
Public Information Coordinator  
Office of the Attorney General  
P.O. Box 12548  
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

OR2008-10798

Dear Ms. Thomas:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 318755.

The Office of the Attorney General (the "OAG") received a request for "documents containing the basic information to deaths in custody of Texas Department of Criminal Justice inmates housed at the Robertson Unit in Abilene, Texas, for dates beginning 5/22/03 and ending 05/22/08." The OAG states it has released some information and asserts the remainder is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the OAG's claimed exception to disclosure and have reviewed the submitted sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Article 49.18(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides that with the exception of any portion of the custodial death

---

<sup>1</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.

report that the OAG determines is privileged, the OAG shall make the report public. Code Crim. Proc. art. 49.18(b). The report was revised in May 2006 and the OAG has determined the report and attached summary of how the death occurred must be released to the public but that any other documents submitted with the revised report are confidential under article 49.18(b). The OAG states it has released the reports and attached summaries. Thus, pursuant to article 49.18(b), the OAG must withhold the attachments to the reports.

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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 challenge 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 "Yen-Ha Le". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Yen" and last name "Le" clearly visible.

Yen-Ha Le  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

YHL/sdk

Ref: ID# 318755

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Erica Surprenant  
Texas Civil Rights Project  
1405 Montopolis drive  
Austin, Texas 78741-3438  
(w/o enclosures)