ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 3, 2008

Mr. Philip A. DeFriend
Assistant General Counsel
TDCJ - Office of the General Counsel
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2008-13585

Dear Mr. DeFriend:

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# 323525.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a named inmate's visitation records and marital status. You state some of the requested information has been or will be provided to the requestor. You claim the submitted inmate records are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You contend the submitted inmate records are protected under section 552.134 of the Government Code, which relates to information about inmates of the department. Section 552.134 provides in relevant part:

> (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029, information obtained or maintained by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). The submitted records pertain to an inmate who was confined in a facility operated by the department. Upon review, we agree the submitted inmate records are subject to section 552.134. We find the exceptions in section 552.029 are not applicable in this instance. Therefore, the department must withhold the submitted inmate records under section 552.134(a) of the Government Code.[1]

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

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[1] As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure for portions of the submitted information.

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,

Leah B. Wingerson

Leah B. Wingerson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LBW/ma

Ref: ID# 323525

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Monica Ortiz
7410 Fir Avenue
Lubbock, Texas 79401
(w/o enclosures)