



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 19, 2011

Ms. Jennifer C. Cohen
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2011-05450

Dear Ms. Cohen:

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# 419519 (ORA # 11-0654).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for information relating to a specified arrest. You state some of the requested information has been released. You claim other responsive information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

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. This exception encompasses federal and state laws that make criminal history record information ("CHRI") confidential. CHRI means "information collected about a person by a criminal justice agency that consists of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions." *Id.* § 411.082(2). Federal law governs the dissemination of CHRI obtained from the National Crime Information Center network. Federal regulations prohibit the release to the general public of CHRI maintained in state and local CHRI systems. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 20.21(c)(1) ("Use of criminal history record information disseminated to

¹Although you do not specifically raise sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code, you have marked information the department seeks to withhold under these sections. Accordingly, we address sections 552.101 and 552.130, which are mandatory exceptions to public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.007, .352; Open Records Decision No. 674 at 3 n.4 (2001) (mandatory exceptions).

noncriminal justice agencies shall be limited to the purpose for which it was given.”) and (c)(2) (“No agency or individual shall confirm the existence or nonexistence of criminal history record information to any person or agency that would not be eligible to receive the information itself.”). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its own individual law with respect to CHRI that it generates. *See* Open Records Decision No. 565 at 10-12 (1990); *see generally* Gov’t Code ch. 411 subch. F. Although sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) of the Government Code authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *See id.* § 411.089(b). We agree the department must withhold the CHRI you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with federal law and subchapter F of chapter 411 of the Government Code.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code 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[.]” *Id.* § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body must reasonably explain how and why section 552.108 is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You have marked the information the department seeks to withhold under section 552.108. You state release of the marked information would interfere with a pending criminal case. Based on your representations, we conclude the department may withhold the marked information under section 552.108(a)(1). *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit issued by an agency of this state. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1). We agree the department must withhold the Texas driver’s license number you have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

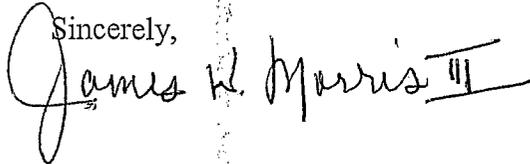
In summary, the department (1) must withhold the marked CHRI under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with federal law and subchapter F of chapter 411 of the Government Code; (2) may withhold the marked information that is related to the pending case under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code; and (3) must withhold the marked Texas driver’s license number under section 552.130 of the Government Code.² The department must release the rest of the submitted information unless it has already done so.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

²We note Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009) is a previous determination issued by this office authorizing all governmental bodies to withhold ten categories of information without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision, including a Texas driver’s license number under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James W. Morris III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/em

Ref: ID# 419519

Enc: Submitted information

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)