



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 7, 2012

Ms. Holly C. Lytle
Assistant County Attorney
El Paso County Attorney's Office
500 East San Antonio, Room 503
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2012-12334

Dear Ms. Lytle:

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# 461172.

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for the mug shot, booking photograph, and booking or arrest records of a named individual. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

The sheriff's office seeks to withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, which 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[.]" Gov't Code § 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). Section 552.108 may be invoked by the proper custodian of information relating to an investigation or prosecution of criminal conduct. *See Open Records Decision No. 474 at 4-5 (1987)*. Where a governmental body possesses information relating to a pending case of a law enforcement agency, the governmental body agency may withhold the information under section 552.108 if (1) it demonstrates the information relates to the pending case and (2) this office is provided with a representation from the law enforcement entity that the law enforcement entity wishes to withhold the information. You state the submitted information is related to a federal arrest. You have provided a copy of an e-mail in which

the United States Marshal Service states release of the submitted information could interfere with a pending prosecution. Based on this representation and our review, we conclude release of the submitted information 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. See 531 S.W.2d 186-87; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the sheriff’s office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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.

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,



Jennifer Burnett
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JB/tch

Ref: ID# 461172

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)