



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 23, 2013

Mr. Aaron Diaz
Legal Assistant - Civil Division
Hays County Criminal District Attorney's Office
110 East Martin Luther King Drive
San Marcos, Texas 78666

OR2013-01320

Dear Mr. Diaz:

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# 477042.

The Hays County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information related to a specified incident. You claim that 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.

We understand you to assert that the responsive information is excepted under section 552.108 as interpreted by *Holmes v. Morales*. See *Holmes v. Morales*, 924 S.W.2d 920 (Tex. 1996). In *Holmes*, the Texas Supreme Court held that the plain language of section 552.108 did not require a governmental body to show that release of the information would unduly interfere with law enforcement. *Id.* at 925. The *Holmes* case further held that "section 552.108's plain language makes no distinction between a prosecutor's 'open' and 'closed' criminal litigation files" and concluded that the Harris County District Attorney may withhold his closed criminal litigation files under that exception. *Id.* Subsequent to the interpretation of section 552.108 in *Holmes*, the Seventy-fifth Legislature amended section 552.108 extensively. See Act of June 1, 1997, 75th Leg., R.S., ch. 1231, § 1, 1997 Tex. Gen. Laws 4697. As amended, section 552.108 now expressly requires a governmental body to explain, among other things, how release of the information would interfere with law enforcement. Accordingly, the

court's ruling in *Holmes*, which construed former section 552.108, is superseded by the amended section, which now reads, in pertinent part, as follows:

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:

(1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]

Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You have not stated that the submitted information pertains to a specific ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution, nor have you explained how its release would interfere in some way with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of a particular crime. Thus, we find you have failed to demonstrate the applicability of section 552.108(a)(1) to the submitted information and the sheriff's office may not withhold any of the submitted information on that basis. As you raise no further exceptions against disclosure, the submitted information must be released.

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,



Vanessa Burgess
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

VB/dls

Ref: ID# 477042

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)