



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 4, 2019

Ms. Jennifer Smith
Assistant District Attorney
Hidalgo County
100 East Cano
Edinburg, Texas 78539

OR2019-03163

Dear Ms. Smith:

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# 749182 (File No. 2018-0171-DA).

The Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") received a request for the names of the grand jury members for a specified case. You claim the submitted information is not subject to the Act. We have considered your argument and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the requestor only seeks the names of the grand jury members for the specified case. Thus, the remaining information is not responsive to the request for information. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the district attorney's office is not required to release this information in response to this request.

The Act generally requires the public disclosure of information maintained by a "governmental body." While the Act's definition of a "governmental body" is broad, it specifically excludes the judiciary. *See* Gov't Code § 552.003(1)(B). In determining whether a governmental entity falls within the judiciary exception of the Act, this office looks to whether the entity is acting in a judicial capacity or solely in an administrative capacity. *See* Open Records Decision No. 646 at 2-3 (1996) (citing *Benavides v. Lee*, 665 S.W.2d 151 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 1983, no writ)).

Chapter 62 of the Government Code, which deals with the judicial branch, provides for the compilation of a list of prospective jurors. *See* Gov't Code §§ 62.001-62.011 (detailing jury list selection methods such as a jury wheel and electronic or mechanical selection). Section 62.012 of the Government Code provides as follows:

(a) When a justice of the peace or a county or district judge requires a jury for a particular week, the judge, within a reasonable time before the prospective jurors are summoned, shall notify the county clerk, for a county court jury, or the district clerk, for a justice or district court jury, to open the next consecutively numbered envelope containing a jury list that is in the clerk's possession and has not been opened. The judge shall also notify the clerk of the date that the prospective jurors are to be summoned to appear for jury service.

(b) On receiving the notice from the judge, the clerk shall immediately write on the jury list the date that the prospective jurors are to be summoned to appear and shall deliver the jury list to:

(1) the sheriff, for a county or district court jury; or

(2) the sheriff or constable, for a justice court jury.

Id. § 62.012. Upon receipt of the jury list, the sheriff summons the prospective jurors to appear on the designated day. *Id.* § 62.013. Chapter 19 of the Code of Criminal Procedure outlines a similar procedure for the selection of prospective grand jurors. In Open Records Decision No. 433 (1986), this office determined a list of prospective grand jurors is a record of the judiciary because the list is “compiled, and at virtually all times is maintained, by the jury commissioners, the district judge, or the court clerk, all of whom are part of the judiciary or agents thereof.” ORD 433 at 2-3. We also found the sheriff was considered an agent of the judiciary when using the grand jury list to summon the jurors for service. *Id.* However, the district attorney holding a list of names of impaneled jurors was not found to be acting as an agent of the judiciary, since he had “no task to perform with that list.” *Id.* at 3. Thus, the list of impaneled jurors held by the district attorney was not within the constructive possession of the judiciary, and was subject to the Act. *Id.*

The responsive information is held by the district attorney's office. Based upon the reasoning in Open Records Decision No. 433, we find this information does not constitute records of the judiciary and is, therefore, subject to the Act. *See* Gov't Code § 552.021 (Act generally requires disclosure of information maintained by “governmental body”). Therefore, as you raise no exceptions to disclosure, the district attorney's office must release the responsive information.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Kieran Hillis
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KH/eb

Ref: ID# 749182

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)