



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 28, 2008

Ms. Donna Clarke
Assistant Criminal District Attorney
County of Lubbock
916 Main Street, Suite 1101
Lubbock, Texas 79401

OR2008-01227

Dear Ms. Clarke:

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# 300979.

The Lubbock County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for any and all records pertaining to a named individual. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the information you have submitted.

Initially, we note that a portion of the submitted information, which we have marked, is not responsive to this request because it does not pertain to the individual at issue. The sheriff need not release nonresponsive information in response to this request and this ruling will not address that information.

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. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be demonstrated. *Id.* at 681-82. A compilation of an individual's criminal history

record information is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. U.S. Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (when considering prong regarding individual's privacy interest, court recognized distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of information and noted that individual has significant privacy interest in compilation of one's criminal history). Furthermore, we find that a compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public. In this instance, the requestor asks for unspecified records pertaining to a named individual, and thus, implicates such individual's right to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the sheriff maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the sheriff must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note that you have submitted information that does not list the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant. Because this information is not part of a compilation of the individual's criminal history, the sheriff may not withhold it under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. A portion of this information is subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that "relates to . . . a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state [or] a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state."¹ Gov't Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the sheriff must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, to the extent the sheriff maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the sheriff must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

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

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

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), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal 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).

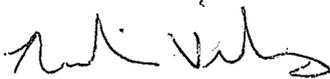
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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 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,



Melanie J. Villars
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MJV/jh

Ref: ID# 300979

Enc. Submitted documents

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(w/o enclosures)