



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

November 13, 2014

Ms. Michelle T. Rangel  
Assistant County Attorney  
Fort Bend County  
401 Jackson Street, Third Floor  
Richmond, Texas 77469

OR2014-20663

Dear Ms. Rangel:

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# 542920.

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified report. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We note the submitted information involves an alleged violation of section 32.51 of the Penal Code, which provides "[a] person commits an offense if the person, with the intent to harm or defraud another, obtains, possesses, transfers, or uses an item of . . . identifying information of another person without the other person's consent[.]" Penal Code § 32.51(b)(1). For purposes of section 32.51, "identifying information" includes an individual's name. *Id.* § 32.51(a)(1)(A). Article 2.29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure pertains to alleged violations of section 32.51 that occurred on or after September 1, 2005 and provides as follows:

(a) A peace officer to whom an alleged violation of Section 32.51, Penal Code, is reported shall make a written report to the law enforcement agency that employs the peace officer that includes the following information:

- (1) the name of the victim;
- (2) the name of the suspect, if known;
- (3) the type of identifying information obtained, possessed, transferred, or used in violation of Section 32.51, Penal Code; and
- (4) the results of any investigation.

(b) On the victim's request, the law enforcement agency shall provide the report created under Subsection (a) to the victim. In providing the report, the law enforcement agency shall redact any otherwise confidential information that is included in the report, other than the information described by Subsection (a).

Crim. Proc. Code art. 2.29. For purposes of article 2.29, an offense is committed on or after September 1, 2005, if no "element of the offense occurs before that date." Act of Jun. 17, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., ch. 294, § 1(b), 2005 Tex. Gen. Laws 885.

In this instance, the submitted report pertains to a forgery investigation, which constitutes an alleged violation of section 32.51. Additionally, the alleged offense occurred after September 1, 2005. We note the requestor may be the authorized representative of the victim. If the requestor is acting as the identity theft victim's authorized representative, then the information is subject to article 2.29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and must be released to the requestor, except to the extent it contains confidential information. *See* Crim. Proc. Code art. 2.29.

You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. However, section 552.108 is a discretionary exception that does not make information confidential. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 586 (1991) (governmental body may waive section 552.108). Therefore, the information at issue may not be withheld under section 552.108 of the Government Code if the requestor is acting as the authorized representative of the victim. However, we note the submitted records contain information subject to sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code, which make information confidential for the purposes of article 2.29.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we will address the applicability of sections 552.101 and 552.130.

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

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<sup>1</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 411.083 of the Government Code, which pertains to criminal history records information (“CHRI”) generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. Title 28 of part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. *See* Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.*

Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except that DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov’t Code § 411.083. Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090-.1410. Thus, any CHRI generated by the federal government or another state may not be made available to the requestor except in accordance with federal regulations. *See* ORD 565. Furthermore, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Government Code chapter 411, subchapter F. Upon review, we find the sheriff’s office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) 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 satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82.

Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. A compilation of an individual’s criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. United States Dep’t of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (finding significant privacy interest in compilation of individual’s criminal history by recognizing distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of criminal history information). Furthermore, we find a compilation of a private citizen’s criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public.

Upon review, we find the information we have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license or driver's license issued by an agency of this state, or another state or country, is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1). The sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In the event the requestor is not the authorized representative of the identity theft victim, we address your argument under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108(a)(2) excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]” Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A).

You state the submitted information relates to a closed criminal investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on your representation and our review of the information at issue, we conclude that section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to this information.

We note that basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. *Id.* § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Accordingly, if the requestor is not the victim's authorized representative, then, except for the basic information, the sheriff's office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.

In summary, if the requestor is acting as the identity theft victim's authorized representative, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under (1) section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with chapter 411 of the Government Code and federal law, (2) section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy, and (3) section 552.130 of the Government Code, but must release the remaining information pursuant to article 2.29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. If the requestor is not acting as the victim's authorized representative, then, except for the basic information,

which must be released, the sheriff's office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](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,



Cindy Nettles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 542920

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)