



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 27, 2015

Ms. Shannon C. Francis
Assistant County Attorney
County of Williamson
405 Martin Luther King, Box 7
Georgetown, Texas 78626

OR2015-10253

Dear Ms. Francis:

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# 564829.

The Williamson County Constable, Precinct One (the "constable's office"), received a request for the requestor's personnel file. You indicate you have released some information to the requestor. You claim 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 submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code. This section governs the public availability of information submitted to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement ("TCOLE") under subchapter J of chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code. Section 1701.454 provides as follows:

- (a) All information submitted to the [TCOLE] under this subchapter is confidential and is not subject to disclosure under [the Act] unless the person

resigned or was terminated due to substantiated incidents of excessive force or violations of the law other than traffic offenses.

(b) Except as provided by this subchapter, a [TCOLE] member or other person may not release information submitted under this subchapter.

Occ. Code § 1701.454. The constable's office asserts the submitted F-5 form is confidential pursuant to section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code. We note the information at issue does not reflect the officer at issue resigned or was terminated due to substantiated incidents of excessive force or violations of the law other than traffic offenses. Therefore, the constable's office must withhold the submitted F-5 form under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 411.083 of the Government Code, which pertains to criminal history record information ("CHRI"). CHRI generated by the National Crime Information Center ("NCIC") or by the Texas Crime Information Center is confidential under federal and state law. CHRI means "information collected about a person by a criminal justice agency that consists of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions." Gov't Code § 411.082(2). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI obtained from the NCIC network or other states. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 20.21. The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. Open Records Decision No. 565 at 7 (1990); *see generally* Gov't Code ch. 411 subch. F. Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI the Texas Department of Public Safety ("DPS") maintains, except 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). Thus, 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. We note, however, active warrant information or other information relating to an individual's current involvement in the criminal justice system does not constitute criminal history information for purposes of section 552.101. *See id.* § 411.081(b). We also note records relating to routine traffic violations are not considered criminal history information. *Cf. id.* § 411.082(2)(B) (criminal history record information does not include driving record information). You assert section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code for the remaining information. Upon review, we find the information we have marked consists of CHRI which the constable's office must withhold under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law. However, we find you have failed to demonstrate how the remaining information at issue consists of confidential CHRI. Therefore, the constable's office may not withhold any

portion of the remaining information at issue under section 552.101 of the Government Code on this basis.

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. U.S. 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. We note, however, that records relating to routine traffic violations are not considered criminal history information. *See Gov't Code* § 411.082(2)(B) (criminal history record information does not include driving record information). Additionally, active warrant information or other information relating to an individual's current involvement in the criminal justice system does not constitute criminal history information for purposes of section 552.101. *Cf. id.* § 411.081(b). Furthermore, the public generally has a legitimate interest in information that relates to public employment and public employees. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 542* (1990), 470 at 4 (1987) (public has legitimate interest in job qualifications and performance of public employees), 444 at 5-6 (1986) (public has legitimate interest in knowing reasons for dismissal, demotion, promotion, or resignation of public employees), 432 at 2 (1984) (scope of public employee privacy is narrow). Upon review, we find none of the remaining information at issue is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Accordingly, none of the remaining information at issue may be withheld under section 552.101 on the basis of common-law privacy.

In summary, the constable's office must withhold the submitted F-5 form under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code. The constable'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. The constable's office must release the remaining 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,



Sean Nottingham
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SN/cbz

Ref: ID# 564829

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)