



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 13, 2015

Ms. Ann-Marie Sheely
Assistant County Attorney
Travis County
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767

OR2015-16738

Dear Ms. Sheely:

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# 575300.

The Travis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for "a criminal background search" on three named individuals. You claim the submitted 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.

Initially, we agree the information you have marked is not responsive to the present request because it does not consist of criminal records of the named individuals. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the sheriff's office is not required to release such information in response to this request.¹

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. This section encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if it (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

¹As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure for this information.

test must be met. *Id.* at 681-82. 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.

The present request requires the sheriff's office to compile unspecified law enforcement records concerning the named individuals. We find such a request for unspecified law enforcement records implicates the individuals' rights to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the sheriff's office maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individuals as suspects, arrestees, or criminal defendants, the sheriff's office must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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,



Nicholas A. Ybarra
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NAY/akg

Ref: ID# 575300

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)