



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 4, 2015

Ms. Melanie Bybee  
Administrative Assistant  
Somervell County Sheriff's Office  
P.O. Box 3268  
Glen Rose, Texas 76043

OR2015-18539

Dear Ms. Bybee:

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# 579899.

The Somervell County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information pertaining to a named individual for specified types of charges.<sup>1</sup> You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

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 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 or embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683.

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<sup>1</sup>You state the sheriff's office sought and received clarification of the request for information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222(b) (stating governmental body may communicate with requestor for purpose of clarifying or narrowing request for information).

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) (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). Moreover, 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 individual named in the request, thus implicating the named individual's right to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the sheriff's office maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the sheriff's office must withhold any 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](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,



Nicole Thomas  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

NT/eb

Ref: ID# 579899

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)