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OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

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HUNT COUNTY, TEXAS

OPEN RECORDS DIVISION

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June 13, 2011

RQ 0976 GA
FILE # M1-46763-11
I.D. # 46763

VIA FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION TO 512-463-2092
and CMRRR# 7010 1060 0001 4591 1525

Honorable Greg Abbott
Attorney General for the State of Texas
300 West 15th Street, Suite 205
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

RE: Request for Attorney General Opinion
Texas Occupations Code § 1704.302(c)

Dear General Abbott:

On behalf of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board, this office is requesting an opinion as to whether or not a Bail Bond Board may enact a rule that restricts a bail bond license holder from employing an individual who is currently on probation, parole, or has a misdemeanor or felony case pending?

Texas Occupations Code § 1704.302(c) states specifically that "A person may not accept or receive from a license holder money, property, or any other thing of value as payment for employment with a bonding business if, within the preceding 10 years, the person has been convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or of a felony." The Hunt County Bail Bond board has incorporated this requirement in Section 9.1(f) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board Rules and Regulations. In addition to aforementioned restriction, the Hunt County Bail Bond Board, in 2010-3

Section 9.1(g) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board Rules and Regulations, states that an employee of a license holder "must not currently be on probation, parole, or have a misdemeanor or felony case pending." See Exhibit A, the Rules and Regulation of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board, as adopted on September 16, 2010

At the present time a licensed Surety of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board has made application for an ID card for an individual that it wishes to employ. The prospective employee is on parole for murder. Furthermore, the prospective employee was convicted of the offense of murder more than ten years ago. Therefore, although the prospective employee is not prohibited from employment under Texas Occupations §1704.302(c) and Section 9.1(f) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board Rules and Regulations, the prospective employee is prohibited from employment under Section 9.1(g) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board Rules and Regulations.

It is the opinion of the Surety that the Hunt County Bail Bond Board, in enacting Section 9.1(g) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Rules and Regulations: (1) exceeded its authority; (2) section 9.1(g) is invalid; and (3) the prospective employee is not prohibited from employment with the Surety. It is the opinion of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board that in enacting Rule 9.1(g) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board Rules and Regulations it did not exceed its authority. Specifically, the Hunt County Bail Bond Board asserts that Rule 9.1(g) is permissible under the Board's administrative authority under Texas Occupations Code §1704.101(1) and (3), which states respectively, that the board shall, "exercise powers incidental or necessary to the administration of this chapter" and "supervise and regulate each phase of the bonding business in the county".

Attached hereto please find the County Attorney's brief regarding this issue in support of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board. See Exhibit B. Finally, attached hereto is a letter brief from the attorney representing the bail bond company. See Exhibit C.

Respectfully submitted,

JOEL D. LITTLEFIELD
HUNT COUNTY ATTORNEY
Or By: Assistant County Attorney
Hunt County Attorney's Office
Hunt County, Texas

EXHIBIT A

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RULES AND REGULATIONS
OF THE
HUNT COUNTY BAIL BOND BOARD

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10 SEP 16 PM 2:18
CLERK OF COUNTY CLERK
HUNT COUNTY TEXAS

SECTION 1
DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 "Bail Bond" means a cash deposit, or similar deposit or written undertaking, or a bond or other security, given to guarantee the appearance of a defendant in a criminal case.
- 1.2 "Bail Bond Surety" or "Surety" means any person who for hire or for any compensation deposits any cash or bonds or other securities or executes as surety or co-surety any bond for other persons.
- 1.3 "Board" means the Hunt County Bail Bond Board.
- 1.4 "Bonding Business" or "Bail Bond Business" means solicitation, negotiation or execution of a bail bond by a bail bond surety.
- 1.5 "Code" refers to Title 10, Chapter 1704 of Vernon's Texas Statutes and Codes Annotated Occupations Code (§1704.001 *et seq.* Texas Occupations Code).
- 1.6 "Company" includes corporations and other business entities.
- 1.7 "License holder" means a person licensed as a surety by the Hunt County Bail Bond Board.
- 1.8 "Person" means an individual or corporation.
- 1.9 "Rules" means the Rules and Regulations as adopted by the Hunt County Bail Bond Board, as amended from time to time.
- 1.10 "Solicitation" means a direct or an indirect conversation, contract, request, invitation or suggestion to any prisoner, while such prisoner is in official custody, official confinement or official processing, that such prisoner should use any particular bonding licensee holder. Solicitation includes the requesting, inviting, asking or suggestion that any other person solicit bail bond business from a prisoner in official custody, official confinement or official processing for a bonding licensee holder, whether or not it involves employment, payment, promise to pay, or any inducement of value whatsoever, to be provided by the bonding licensee holder or agent to such person. Each solicitation is a separate offense.

SECTION 2
THE BOARD

2.1 Name.

The name of the Board is the Hunt County Bail Bond Board.

2.2 Address.

The mailing address of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board is: HUNT COUNTY BAIL BOND BOARD, c/o HUNT COUNTY CLERK, 2507 Lee Street, Greenville, Texas 75401.

2.3 Members of the Board.

a. The board consists of:

1. The sheriff or a designee from the sheriff's office who must be the administrator or a deputy sheriff of the rank at least sergeant;
2. A district judge of Hunt County having jurisdiction over criminal matters and designated by the presiding judge of the administrative judicial district, or a designee of the district judge who is approved by the presiding judge;
3. The county judge, a member of the commissioners court designated by the county judge, or a designee approved by the commissioners court;
4. A judge of a county court at law in Hunt County having jurisdiction over criminal matters and designated by the commissioners court, or a designee of the judge who is approved by the commissioners court;
5. The district attorney or an assistant district attorney designated by the district attorney;
6. A licensed bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety in Hunt County elected under Section 1704.0535, or a bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety licensed in Hunt County who is designated by the elected surety or agent;
7. A justice of the peace;
8. The district clerk or the clerk's designee;
9. The county clerk or the clerk's designee;
10. If appointed by the board, a presiding judge of a municipal court located within Hunt County;
11. The county treasurer or the treasurer's designee; and
12. A criminal defense attorney practicing in the county and elected by other attorneys whose principal places of business are located in the county and

who are not legally prohibited from representing criminal defendants, or the designee of the criminal defense attorney.

- b. Persons authorized to designate the member of the board in a particular category named above shall make such designation in writing.
- c. The board shall annually conduct a secret ballot election to elect the member of the board who serves as the representative of licensed bail bond sureties by electing a licensed bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety board member. Each individual licensed in the county as a bail bond surety or agent for a corporate surety is entitled to cast one vote for each license held. If no bondsman receives a majority of the votes cast, a run-off election will be immediately conducted. The two (2) bondsmen that receive the most votes cast in the first election will be the only two (2) candidates on the ballot in the run-off election. The bondsman receiving the most votes in the run-off election will be certified the elected representative for the HCBBB. If three (3) or more bondsmen receive the same number of votes in the first election, and more than any other bondsman, then all such bondsmen will be included in the run-off election ballot.

2.4 Organization of the Board.

- a. The board, at each August meeting, shall elect a presiding officer ("chair"), vice-chair and secretary and shall recognize the members for the coming year.
- b. The chair shall preside at all meetings. The chair may vote on board matters.
- c. The vice-chair shall act in the temporary absence of the chair. The vice-chair shall automatically become chair if the chair fails attend three (3) consecutive meetings for any reason. The board shall then elect a new vice-chair at its next regular meeting.
- d. In the absence of the chair or vice-chair at a regular or special meeting of the board, any other member may preside as acting chair.
- e. The secretary shall keep the minutes of meetings and shall have the responsibility of preserving records of the board except as specifically provided in these rules. If the secretary fails to attend three (3) consecutive meetings for any reason, the board shall elect a new secretary at the next regular meeting.
- f. A license holder who is a member of the board is disqualified to vote in any matter directly concerning issuance, suspension or revocation of the license holder's license.

2.5 Meetings and Agenda.

- a. The board shall meet on the third calendar Thursday of each month or as determined by the board.

- b. Meetings shall be held in the Hunt County Commissioner's Auxiliary Courtroom, located at 2700 Johnson Street, Greenville, Texas 75401 unless otherwise determined by the Board.
- c. The board may meet at such other times and places specified in the Notice of Meeting at the call of the chair or vice-chair.
- d. Four members shall constitute a quorum.
- e. The board may take action only on a majority vote of the Board members present.
- f. The agenda shall be prepared and posted by the chair or secretary. All required notices shall be sent or e-mailed by the chair or secretary to all board members.
- g. Meetings are subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act and notice shall be posted as required in that Act by posting a copy of the agenda at the entrance of the Hunt County Courthouse at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of any regular or special meeting, with a copy thereof delivered to or e-mailed to each member at the address supplied by each member to the secretary.
- h. Matters to be considered at the next regularly scheduled HCBBB meeting must be submitted to the Board Chairman as early as possible, but at least 7 business days prior to the meeting. Failure to timely submit all necessary documents will result in the matter not being placed on the agenda to be heard by the HCBBB until such time as the item has been submitted timely and in complete form. If a matter has been placed on the HCBBB agenda, and later is requested to be withdrawn from the agenda prior to the hearing (due to a reason that is not the fault of the HCBBB), the request to have the matter withdrawn must be in writing and the matter shall not be heard during a sixty (60) day period from the date of the request to withdraw; however, the HCBBB, in its sole discretion, may continue the item until the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting.
- i. If a matter has been placed on the HCBBB agenda to be heard, and due to a circumstance caused by the HCBBB, it is not heard, the matter will be continued until the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting.
- j. No item will be placed on an agenda until all relevant information is delivered to the secretary of the board. This specifically includes, but is not limited to, original or renewal applications and requests to increase collateral by putting additional property in trust.
- k. Any requests for special or emergency meetings shall be by written request to the chair of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board and shall be accompanied by all pertinent data including a written statement of why a special or emergency meeting should be called. The request for an emergency meeting must comply

with the Texas Open Meetings Act. The determination of the need for a special or emergency meeting shall be made at the sole discretion of the chair.

SECTION 3

RULES AND REGULATIONS

3.1 Adoption, Amendment and Repeal.

The Rules and Regulations of the board may be adopted, altered, amended or repealed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of all the members present at a regularly scheduled meeting of the board, provided that at least 14 days written notice is given of the proposed adoption, alteration, amendment or repeal, by posting the proposed rules in the same manner as posting notice of meetings of the board.

3.2 State Law Controls.

These regulations are intended to comply with applicable state statutes relative to bail bonds, particularly Chapter 1704 of the Code. In the event of any conflict between these regulations and any Texas law, the latter shall govern. A provision found to violate state law will be considered void and severed from the regulations, and the balance of the regulations shall remain in full force and effect.

3.3 Responsibility of License Holders.

These rules and regulations are not duplicative of the provisions of Texas law governing the making of bail bonds or the regulations governing bail bond sureties. It is the responsibility of all license holders to read, be familiar with and follow the requirements of Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1704 and the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure provisions regarding bail bonds.

SECTION 4

LICENSING

4.1 License Required.

- a. No person may act as a bail bond surety in Hunt County, Texas without first obtaining a license from the Hunt County Bail Bond Board, except as otherwise provided by law.
- b. A person licensed to practice law in the State of Texas may execute a bail bond or

act as a surety for persons the attorney actually represents in criminal cases as provided by the Code.

- c. A separate license is required for each agent operating under a corporate power of attorney.
- d. An individual may hold one license as an individual and one license as an agent for a corporate surety, but may not hold more than one of each type of license.

4.2 Application.

- a. A person seeking a license shall submit an original and ten (10) copies of a sworn application for license to the Hunt County Clerk together with the required filing fee.
- b. The filing fee for an application is \$500.00 and is not refundable.
- c. An application shall be made on the form promulgated by the board and be completed in full.
- d. All applications must include:

- 1. **Private Surety:** A current, sworn financial statement that includes all assets and liabilities. The statement shall be made on a form prescribed by the board and dated within 90 days of the application. Only the original financial statement is required to contain account numbers, social security number and date of birth, and this information may be redacted from the copies.

Insurance Surety: Financial statements for insurance companies are issued as laid out by the State Board of Insurance. The financial statement included in a new / renewal application shall be dated closest to one of the dates listed:

a. Annual statements are due by March 1st of each year.

b. Quarterly statements are due by:

May 15 - August 15 and November 15 during each year.

- 2. An Authorization of Release form allowing the HCBBB or its designee to investigate the information contained in the financial statement.
- 3. A set of fingerprints of the applicant. If the applicant is a corporation, a set of the fingerprints of the person who will be the agent of the corporation for the business. In a renewal application, a copy of the fingerprints filed with the original application.
- 4. If the applicant is a corporation, the name and address of the corporation's agent for service of process and a statement that the

corporation will notify the board's secretary of any change in this designation.

- e. Applicants pledging real property as security must include the following items in the application, in addition to the items required by Section 1704.155 of the Code:
1. A current statement indicating the net value of the property according to the appropriate Tax Appraisal District or, at the discretion of the applicant, a current appraisal indicating the net value of the property made by a real estate appraiser who is a member in good standing of a nationally recognized professional appraiser society or trade organization that has an established code of ethics, educational program and professional certification program. A "current appraisal" is one made within twelve (12) months immediately preceding the date the application is submitted to the board.
 2. An agreement to keep current the insurance on any improvements on the property against any damage or destruction while the property remains in trust, in the full amount of the value claimed for improvements, showing the board as the first mortgagee and any loss payable to the benefit of the board. The applicant shall provide the board with a copy of the policy and a copy of any insurance renewal policy on or before each annual license anniversary date. The applicant shall notify the board in writing of any cancellation, termination or lapse in the policy required herein.
 3. A proposed Deed of Trust which the applicant plans to execute to the Board on the property. If the applicant is married, the applicant's spouse must also execute the Deed of Trust or provide a sworn affidavit to be filed in the Deed Records that the spouse agrees to the transfer to the board, any right, title, or interest that the spouse may have in the property. The board shall be listed as first lien holder on any real property placed with the board for security.
 4. A current photo of the property.
 5. A form prescribed by the board affirming that the applicant will not designate the property as a homestead.
- f. An application for renewal of a license shall include a list of all the license holder's active bonds, pending judgments nisi and final judgments pending payment.
- g. It is the responsibility of the applicant to insure that all of these requirements are

followed and that all necessary information is provided to the board prior to consideration of any original or renewal application.

4.8 Consideration by the Board.

After an application has been properly submitted and the fee has been paid, the following procedure shall be followed:

- a. The application shall be placed on the agenda for initial consideration at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board.
- b. Unless otherwise directed by the board at the meeting where initial consideration is given to the application, a designee of the HCBBB shall cause an investigation to be made to determine whether or not the applicant possesses sufficient financial resources to comply with the Code and satisfies all other requirements of the Code and these regulations, and shall cause those findings to be submitted to the board in an oral or written report at the next meeting. If any person or entity contacted in the course of the investigation requires a release before divulging information that is different than the release form provided by the board, the designee of the HCBBB shall contact the applicant and request completion of the required release. If the applicant refuses to complete the release, the designee of the HCBBB shall notify the board, and the board may consider the applicant's refusal to complete the required release in its decision to grant or deny the license.
- c. The application for a new or renewal license will not be considered for approval at the first meeting during which the application is initially presented.
- d. The applicant shall be notified of the date of final hearing on the application by mail, fax or e-mail, which includes a copy of the agenda and notice of the meeting, to the address contained in the application.
- e. If, after hearing, the board is satisfied that no ground exists on which to deny the application, the board shall enter an order conditionally approving the application subject to the application being perfected by the filing of the security deposits required of the license holder. At the end of ninety (90) days, if the required security deposits have not been made as required to the treasurer, conditional approval shall expire without notice and the applicant will have to reapply.
- f. If the board determines that a ground exists to deny the application, the board shall enter an order to that effect.

- g. An order conditionally approving or denying an application for a new license, shall be sent to the applicant by the board secretary and a copy retained for the records. When all application requirements are met and the required collateral has been filed with the Treasurer, the secretary shall mail a License Certificate to the applicant. The renewal date on the certificate will be as required in the Occupations Code, from the day the proper collateral was filed with the Treasurer.
- h. An order approving or denying an application for an existing license to be renewed will be mailed to the applicant by the board secretary and a copy retained for the records. A new License Certificate, if granted a renewal, will be mailed to the applicant and a copy will be retained for the record.

4.4 License Expiration and Renewal.

- a. The filing fee for a renewal application is Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00). The fee is not refundable and shall accompany the application.
- b. The application for renewal shall have the same form and content as an application for the original license. The applicant shall include a copy of any certificate of deposit and a copy of a recorded C.D. assignment. If real property is pledged the applicant shall include a copy of the recorded deed of trust and all other documents pertaining to real property that are required in an original application.
- c. It is the responsibility of the licensee holder to apply for renewal. If a renewal application is not timely filed and the current license expires, the license holder shall not execute bail bonds until a new license is issued.
- d. If a renewal application is not timely filed, an original application is required.

4.5 Revocation and Suspension of License.

- a. A Notice of Hearing to suspend or revoke a license shall be sent by regular mail, hand-delivery or e-mail to each member of the board, and shall be posted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act at the entrance of the Hunt County Courthouse.
- b. The licensee holder shall have the right to be represented by an attorney at a hearing to suspend or revoke a license.
- c. If a suspension or revocation is imposed, no probation of the suspension or revocation shall be allowed.
- d. If a license is suspended under Section 1704.253 of the Code for failure to maintain required security, that suspension shall be reported by the treasurer to

the board and included in the minutes of the board at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

- a. The district or county clerk shall immediately notify the sheriff if a bail bond surety fails to pay a final judgment as provided by Section 1704.204(a) of the Code. After receiving a notification, the sheriff shall not accept any further bonds from the bail bond surety until the surety pays the judgment. The bail bond surety's privilege to post bonds is reinstated when the bail bond surety pays the judgment.

SECTION 5 SECURITY

5.1 Deposit of Security.

Upon notice that an application for license has been conditionally approved, every applicant shall within ninety (90) days:

- a. Deposit with the treasurer a cashier's check, a copy of the certificate of deposit and a CD assignment from the bank where the CD is held showing the board as lien holder, in the form prescribed by the HCBBB, and a financial institution acknowledgment of said assignment, in the form prescribed by the HCBBB, or cash in the amount indicated in the application, but not less than \$50,000.00, which shall be held in a special fund to be called the Bail Bond Security Fund; or
- b. If real property is to be used as security by the applicant, the applicant shall, together with the applicant's spouse (if the applicant is married), execute a Deed of Trust, in the form prescribed by the HCBBB, to the real property listed in the application, with the chair as trustee, conveying said property in trust to the board and, an affidavit stating that the real property is not a homestead property nor will the property be used or designated as a homestead, in a form prescribed by the HCBBB.
 1. The property shall be valued in the amount indicated on the appraisal presented to the board and in the event of more than one appraisal being presented to the board, the appraisal accepted by the board during the application process. The value of the property may not be less than \$50,000.
 2. The Deed of Trust shall be delivered to the chair for approval. The applicant shall then record the deed of trust, pay all filing fees and deliver the deed to the treasurer.

3. The applicant shall provide a binder from an insurance company showing the board as mortgagor or primary loss payee on any improvements on the property.

5.2 Additional Security.

- a. The treasurer may accept cash, certificates of deposit, or cashiers checks for additional security without further board action. Once deposited, such additional security will effect an increase in the license holder's security limit within two business days.
- b. The treasurer may receive additional security in the form of real property but such additional security is not effective until approved by the board at a next regularly scheduled meeting.

5.8 Records.

The treasurer shall keep all original applications and records regarding real estate placed in trust with the board, which records shall include insurance and tax payments.

5.4 Cash Deposits.

- a. The treasurer may purchase Certificates of Deposit with cash deposited as security, if deemed advisable by the treasurer, and the interest thus accruing shall remain on deposit and accrue to the account of the license holder.
- b. The treasurer shall make periodic reports to the license holder of the amount of interest accrued.
- c. Funds withdrawn to pay final judgments of forfeiture shall be paid by check signed by the treasurer.
- d. The Bail Bond Security Fund shall be subject to audit by the county auditor.

5.5 Withdrawal of Security.

- a. A license holder may withdraw security only as provided by Section 1704.210 of the Code or by these rules.
- b. If a license holder's liability, actual or potential, falls below the amount of security pledged, the license holder may, with the board's approval, withdraw security to the extent that the remaining security is sufficient to cover the license holder's liability.
- c. The license holder may, with board approval, substitute one form of security for

another, provided that the security remains sufficient to cover the license holder's liability.

- d. No license holder may withdraw security from deposit, or make changes to the nature, location, identification or amount of security deposited, without the board's knowledge and approval.

SECTION 6 OPERATION OF BONDING BUSINESS

6.1 Writing Bonds.

Bonds shall be made under the following regulations:

- a. Within three (3) days of the principal's release on the bond, a contract shall be executed between the surety and the principal and a copy given to the principal immediately after signing.
- b. The contract shall set forth all the following information:
1. The amount of the bond fee. If the contract is for more than one bond, then the fee for each bond shall be set out separately together with a total fee.
 2. The amount of any late fees or penalties and the conditions under which they may be imposed.
 3. Any finance charges.
 4. Any payment schedule, which shall include any down payment collected, how often a payment is due, how much the payment is, what date the first payment is due and when the subsequent payments are due.
 5. The amount and type of property taken for payment of the bail bond fee.
 6. The amount and type of property held by the bail bond surety for assurance of the principal's appearance in court and the conditions under which the property will be returned.
- c. No security shall be held for the payment of a bail bond fee and assurance of the principal's appearance in court that is in excess of the particular risk involved.
- d. A bail bond surety may, at any time, by posting additional security, increase the bail bond surety's limit pursuant to 5.2.a.

6.2 Notification.

The sheriff shall immediately notify each court, including justices of the peace and municipal courts having jurisdiction over criminal matters in the county, and each

entity charged with the responsibility of housing any prisoner in official custody pending trial, when a bail bond surety's license is suspended or revoked or an agent's authority is rescinded.

6.3 Bond Form.

Bonds shall be written on a form approved by the board.

6.4 Identification to telephone caller.

A license holder or agent answering a telephone call to a bail bond surety's office phone number shall identify the actual or assumed business name of the surety to the caller.

6.5 Name of business.

The assumed name of each license holder's business must be unique. No license holder may operate under an assumed name that is a derivative or substantially similar to a name being used by another license holder, except that a person who is operating one business as an individual and a separate business as an agent for a corporate surety may operate both business under names that are similar or derivative.

SECTION 7

LICENSE HOLDER RECORDS

7.1 In General.

- a. A license holder shall maintain a record of each bond on which the license holder appears as surety and shall maintain a separate set of records for each county in which the surety is licensed.
- b. In addition to the information specified in the Code, the records shall include a copy of any contract executed between the license holder and the principal or the principal's agent as well as any receipt issued to the principal or the principal's agent for cash or property received from the principal or the principal's agent.

7.2 Receipt for collateral.

A license holder shall have a receipt signed by the surety and the principal or principal's agent, stating the following:

- a. The name of the person for whom the bond is posted;

- b. The county and case number(s) the collateral covers;
- c. Whether the collateral is being held for appearance and/or payment of fee;
- d. When the collateral will be returned;
- e. A list (description) of the collateral; and
- f. How request may be made for return of the collateral.

7.3 Agent for service.

Within 10 days of a change in the designation of a corporate license holder's agent for service of process, the license holder shall notify the Board secretary of the change in writing and provide the new agent's name and address.

- 7.4 License Holder Reporting Requirements Regarding Liability. Each bondsman shall produce a list of all outstanding bonds and the amount of the license holder's current total liabilities on Judgments Nisi in Hunt County to the Hunt County Sheriff on or before the 10th day of each month. This report shall include the name of the Defendant and the amount of the bond posted. The list shall be acknowledged and signed by the bondsman.

SECTION 8

PAYMENT OF FINAL JUDGMENTS OF FORFEITURES

8.1 In general.

If a final judgment of forfeiture that results from the license holder's execution of a bail bond remains unpaid thirty-one (31) days after the date of the final judgment, the cash deposit or proceeds from foreclosure of a deed of trust shall be paid in satisfaction of that judgment, pursuant to 1704.204 of the Occupations Code.

8.2 Cash deposited as security.

A license holder's cash deposit, if any, shall be paid in satisfaction of a bond forfeiture judgment upon presentation to the treasurer of a certified copy of a final judgment. Payments shall be to the clerk of the court in which the judgment was rendered.

8.3 Real property executed as security.

- a. Upon presentation to the board of a certified copy of final judgment, the deed of

trust to real property executed as security shall be immediately ordered to be posted for foreclosure in accordance with the statutes governing foreclosures of deeds of trust and the property shall be sold at foreclosure.

- b. Upon posting for foreclosure, the security deposit of the license holder is considered depleted by the appraised value of the property.
- c. Proceeds from the foreclosure sale shall first be applied to any expenses of sale and to court costs, and the remainder then applied to the principal and interest owing on the judgment.
- d. If the proceeds are insufficient to satisfy the judgment, then additional properties of the license holder held in trust by the board may be foreclosed in accordance with the trust provisions and if the proceeds from the foreclosure sale are insufficient to satisfy the judgment, then the board may direct that execution issue on the judgment against any non-exempt property that the license holder may have.
- e. Proceeds remaining after satisfaction of the judgment shall be paid over to the treasurer for the deposit to the account of the license holder as security for outstanding bonds.

SECTION 9

EMPLOYEES OF LICENSE HOLDERS

9.1 EMPLOYEE DEFINITION:

"Employee" as used herein shall mean any person hired by a Licensed Surety who performs any of the following duties:

- a. meets and negotiates in person, or communicates on any telecommunication line, orally or in writing, with members of the public for the purpose of soliciting bail bonds or with reference to any aspect of the bail bond business on any premises where the bondsman conducts his bail bond business (jails, courthouses, offices, etc); or
- b. receives money as a fee, or money or real property as collateral for bail bonds; or
- c. interviews or takes information from persons who have been released from jail pursuant to a bail bond provided by the Surety; or
- d. discusses any aspect of the bail bond business and
- e. must be at least 18 years of age,
- f. must not have been convicted of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or a felony in the past ten (10) years and
- g. is not currently on probation, parole or has a misdemeanor or felony case pending.

9.2 OBLIGATIONS OF THE SURETY:

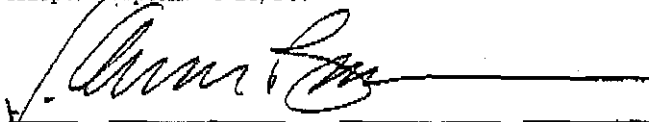
- a. A Surety must not employ, or keep in employment, any person who does not have an ID card issued by the HCBBB.
- b. A Surety may not employ a person that has not returned their ID card from another bond company to the HCBBB, unless approved by the board.
- c. The Surety must take reasonable steps to insure that his employees comply with the Texas Occupations Code and the By Laws of the HCBBB.
- d. A complete application form must be turned into the HCBBB Secretary within ten (10) days of hiring a new employee with a non-refundable \$25.00 check. The application will be placed on the next regularly scheduled meeting of the HCBBB for consideration. The \$25.00 fee covers a criminal history check, finger print card and the ID. The HCBBB Secretary will mail the authorization letter to obtain the ID to the Surety. It is the Surety's obligation to contact the Hunt County Sheriff's office to schedule a time, with the letter, to have the ID card made.
- e. It is the obligation of the Surety to notify the HCBBB Secretary, in writing, within five (5) days of termination of an employee so they can be removed from the approved Employee list given to the courts and jails.
- f. The Surety is obligated to return the ID card to the Sheriff's Office's representative on the HCBBB within five (5) days of termination of an employee.

9.8 GENERAL EMPLOYEE RULES

- a. The HCBBB may revoke or suspend an ID card if the employee has at any time, either before or after the effective date of this rule, violated the Occupations Code or the By Laws of the HCBBB.
- b. An Employee must not do anything which a licensed Surety is prohibited from doing. If an employee is found to have violated the requirements and rules to be an employee, the HCBBB can cancel their ID card and they can no longer be employed by any licensed surety.
- c. The procedure for revocation or suspension of an ID card is the same as for revocation or suspension of a Surety's license.
- d. An applicant who is denied a license may not reapply for a period of six (6) months from the date of their application.
- e. Sureties will be held responsible for the actions of their employees.
- f. A Surety shall not order, encourage, or knowingly or recklessly permit an Employee to violate Chapter 1704 of the Texas Occupations Code or the HCBBB

By-Laws. All Sureties who employ an Employee who violates the law or this Board's are subject to suspension or revocation of their license.

Adopted September 16, 2010



Chair: J. Andrew Bench, HUNT COUNTY BAIL BOND BOARD


Secretary: Linda Brooks, HUNT COUNTY BAIL BOND BOARD

EXHIBIT B

RE: REQUEST FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINION
TEXAS OCCUPATIONS CODE § 1704.302(C)

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S BREIF

I.

QUESTION PRESENTED

Can the Hunt County Bail Bond Board enact a requirement that a bail bond employee must not currently be on probation or parole or have pending criminal charges when Texas Occupations Code §1704.302(c) contains a less restrictive requirement that forbids a person from being employed by a bail bondsmen who has a conviction for a felony or crime of moral turpitude within the last ten years?

II.

HUNT COUNTY ATTORNEY'S POSITION

A bail bond board may enact a rule forbidding a licensee from employing such a person under Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1704 as part of the board's statutory grant of power to "exercise powers incidental or necessary" to the administration of the Bail Bond Board Act.

III.

SUPPORTING AUTHORITY AND REASONING

The applicant in the situation before the Hunt County Bail Bond Board contends in her letter that the rule at issue here exceeds the Board's rule making authority because it imposes an additional burden or condition on the potential licensee. In support of her position, the applicant cites to several cases. However, the applicant misstates the general rule and the cases she cites do not support her position. It is true that a bail bond board may not add an additional requirement or condition on an applicant to obtain a bail bond license. Dallas County Bail Bond Board v. Stein, 771. S.W.2d 577, 580 (Tex. App.-Dallas, 1989, writ denied). However, the applicant here does not show how laying out certain qualifications for employees of a licensed bail bond business can be considered a "licensing requirement." Instead the rule at issue here falls the under Board's broad rule making authority to "exercise powers incidental or necessary to the administration of [Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1704], . . . and "supervise and regulate

each phase of the bonding business." See Pruett v. Harris County Bail Bond Board, 249 S.W.3d 447, 452 (Tex. 2008); Tex. Occ. C. Section 1704.101(1),(3).

There exists an important distinction between rules enacted to regulate the business of an already licensed bail bonds company and rules that expand on the licensing requirements to obtain a bail bond license. The former is permissible while the later is not. Pruett at 454. A rule forbidding a licensee from employing a parolee or probationer is a clear example of a rule regulating a phase of the bail bond business within the county. Two courts of appeals cases are particularly helpful in resolving the issue in this case. In Dallas County Bail Bond Bd. v. Stein, 771 S.W.2d 577, 580 (Tex. App.-Dallas 1989, writ denied), the Dallas County Bail Bond Board enacted a requirement that any agent of a bail bond licensee must meet the same criminal history standards of a licensee. The court found such a rule was a valid exercise of the rule making authority of the board. The court stated that the Bail Bond Act "impliedly authorizes the Board to supervise and regulate employees of bondsmen to the extent that such employees perform meaningful duties in the bonding business." Id. at 580. Since the court's holding in Stein, Texas Occupations Code §1704.302(c) was enacted, specifically forbidding a person from being employed with a bail bond licensee if they have a conviction within the last ten years for a felony or crime of moral turpitude. A licensee, on the other hand, must not have a conviction for a felony or crime of moral turpitude since August 27, 1973. Texas Occupation Code §1704.153. In Smith v. Johnson Count Bail Bond Board, 2005 WL 3436798 (Tex. App. Waco, 2006 pet stricken), the Waco Court of Appeals addressed the specific issue of whether §1704.302(c) is an eligibility requirement for obtaining a bail bond license thereby foreclosing the option for a bail bond board to amend or expand on the requirement. The court found that §1704.302(c) is not a licensing requirement, "The clear wording of the statute indicates section 1704.302 does not apply to the licensing of agents." Id. at 2. The court elaborated as to why the rule was therefore a valid exercise of rule making power. "[I]t is appropriate, in furtherance of the [Bail Bond] Act, to impose eligibility requirements for agents or employees of licensed bail bondspersons because requirements for these individuals do not exist in the Act." Id.; citing Stein, 771 S.W.2d 577, 580. Though unpublished, the facts in Smith are very similar to the present situation and the reasoning of the court applies equally here. The Smith rule prohibited employees from having any conviction for a felony or crime or moral turpitude. The Hunt County rule requires that an employee not currently be on probation or parole or have any current pending criminal charges. Both rules exceed the standard found in §1704.302(c), and just like the rule in Smith, the Hunt

County should be not be considered not an additional burden on licensing requirements, but a rule enacted within the Board's power to regulate all phases of the bail bond business.

IV.

THE CASES AND AUTHORITES CITED BY THE APPLICANT
IN THIS CASE ARE INAPPLICABLE

The cases cited within the applicant's letter arguing against the rule in this situation all deal with bail bond rules that are considered licensing requirements and were properly struck down for that reason or on other unrelated grounds.

Walstad v. Dallas County Bail Bond Board, 996 S.W.2d 314, 317 (Tex. App. Dallas 1999, no pet.) and Dallas County Bail Bond Board v. Black, 833 S.W.2d 247, 249 (Tex. App. Dallas 1992, no pet.) deal with the very limited issue of whether a bail bond board can utilize a different method of valuing a licensee applicant's property from the method outlined in Chapter 1704. Such rules clearly touch on the requirements to apply for and obtain a bail bonds license. Harris County Bail Bond Board v. Burns, 790 S.W.2d 862, 864-65 (Tex. App. Houston [14th] 1990, writ denied) deals specifically with whether a bail bond board can refuse to grant a request for a legislative continuance. The ruling in that case is not related to the issue of a bail bond board's rule making authority. The contested rule in Black v. Dallas County Bail Bond Board, 882 S.W. 2d 434 (Tex. App. Dallas 1994, no pet.) was not struck down because it expanded on licensing requirements, but because the rule violated the separation of powers clause.

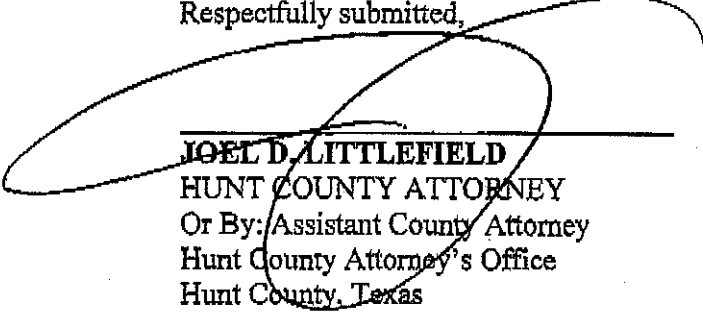
The final case the applicant cites is Harris County Bail Bond Board v. Blackwood, 2 S.W.3d 31, 36-36 (Tex. App. Houston [1st] 1999 *overruled on other grounds*, 41 S.W.3d 123 (2000)). In Blackwood, the bail bond board refused to renew the license of Allegheny Mutual Casualty Company because an employee of Allegheny had several personal judgments against him as an individual bondsman that arose before his employment with Allegheny. The court held that the fact that an agent of a licensee could not get his own license cannot be imputed upon the licensee who is actually making the application. *Id.* at 36. However, Blackwood is not applicable here because the applicant here already has a license and is only seeking approval to hire an employee who does not meet Hunt County Board Rule 9.1(g).

V.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the Hunt County Attorney's Office is of the opinion that Rule 9.1(g) of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board is valid as it does not exceed the rule making authority of the bond granted by the Texas Legislature and is a valid regulation of a phase of the bail bonds business.

Respectfully submitted,



JOEL D. LITTLEFIELD
HUNT COUNTY ATTORNEY
Or By: Assistant County Attorney
Hunt County Attorney's Office
Hunt County, Texas

EXHIBIT C

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October 18, 2010

Hon. J. Andrew Bench
Chairman, Hunt County Bail Bond Board
P.O. Box 1097
Greenville, Texas 75403

Re: Public Bail Bonds: [REDACTED]

Dear Judge Bench:

I represent [REDACTED] an agent of [REDACTED] who is doing business as Public Bail Bonds in Hunt County. She is concerned about Board Rule 9.1 (g), which prohibits her from employing anyone who is currently on parole. [REDACTED] wishes to employ a person who has substantial experience in the bail bonding industry and has not been convicted of a felony within the last 24 years but is excluded by newly adopted Hunt County Bail Bond Rule §9.1(g).

Section 1704.302 (c) of the Texas Occupations Code prohibits a licensee from employing a person who, in the preceding 10 years, has had a felony conviction. Nothing in the Occupations Code prohibits a licensee from employing a person who has not had a felony conviction in the preceding 10 years, but is currently on parole.

The law is clear that a county bail bond board may not adopt rules and regulations which impose additional burdens, conditions or restrictions in excess of or inconsistent with statutory provisions. *Bexar County Bail Bond Board v. Deckard*, 604 S.W.2d 214, 216 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1980, no writ). *See also, Texas Fire & Casualty Co. v. Harris County Bail Bond Board*, 684 S.W.2d 177, 178-179 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.c.).

There are many published cases where appellate courts have struck down bail bond board rules that imposed additional burdens and conditions on the licensee. *See Harris County Bail Bond Board v. Blackwood*, 2 S.W.3d 31, 35 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1999), *overruled on other grounds*, 41 S.W.3d 123 (2000) (board could not consider personal money judgments against the licensee as grounds to bar license renewal); *Walstad v. Dallas County Bail Bond Board*, 996 S.W.2d 314, 317 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (board could not base its licensing decision on a valuation of property obtained by an

appraiser of the board's choosing); *Black v. Dallas County Bail Bond Board*, 882 S.W.2d 434, 439 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1994, no pet.) (board could not promulgate rule allowing the sheriff to determine rearrest costs); *Dallas County Bail Bond Board v. Black*, 833 S.W.2d 247, 248-249 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1992, no pet.) (board could not use the appraisal fixed by the Dallas County Appraisal District to affix a value to property submitted by an applicant); and *Harris County Bail Bond Board v. Burns*, 790 S.W.2d 862, 864 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1990, writ denied) (board could not disregard mandatory legislative continuance).

Moreover, the law requires all concerned to assume the Legislature was aware of all case law affecting or relating to a statute, *Grunsfeld v. State*, 843 S.W.2d 521, 523 (Tex. Crim. App. 1992). Despite all the controversy over the years over the scope of the boards' regulatory powers, the Legislature has never enacted any provision prohibiting a licensee from employing a person who has not had a felony conviction in the preceding 10 years, but still is on parole. Had the Legislature intended that such a restriction be imposed, it would have been a very simple matter for the Legislature to enact such a restriction in Chapter 1704 of the Occupations Code.

I do not believe that Rule 9.1 (g) is within the Board's regulatory powers under Chapter 1704.101 and I submit that [redacted] can employ a person who has not had a felony conviction in the previous 10 years, but is currently on parole. I would be happy to discuss this issue with you and the Board's counsel at your earliest convenience or this matter could be placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Very truly yours,


Douglas D. Mulder