



December 13, 2001

Ms. Christine Pacheco
Legal Advisor
El Paso County Sheriff's Department
P.O. Box 125
El Paso, Texas 79941

OR2001-5824

Dear Ms. Pacheco:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 156174.

The El Paso County Sheriff's Department (the "department") received a written request for "all records and/or letters in which [the department] has ordered an employee to submit to a polygraph examination in the last three (3) years." You contend that the requested information is made confidential under section 1703.306 of the Occupations Code and therefore must be withheld from the public pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code protects "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 1703.306 of the Occupations Code governs the release of polygraph information and provides:

(a) A polygraph examiner, trainee, or employee of a polygraph examiner, or a person for whom a polygraph examination is conducted or an employee of the person, may not disclose information *acquired from a polygraph examination* to another person other than:

- (1) the examinee or any other person specifically designated in writing by the examinee;
- (2) the person that requested the examination;
- (3) a member, or the member's agent, of a governmental agency that licenses a polygraph examiner or supervises or control a polygraph examiner's activities;

- (4) another polygraph examiner in private consultation; or
- (5) any other person required by due process of law.

(b) The board or any other governmental agency that acquires information from a polygraph examination under this section shall maintain the confidentiality of the information.

Occ. Code § 1703.306 (emphasis added). This provision prohibits the release of “information acquired from a polygraph examination” to anyone other than those individuals listed in subsection (a). *See also* Open Records Decision No. 430 (1985) (results of examination, questions asked, and those marked as control questions confidential under predecessor statute).

In this instance, however, the information at issue was not “acquired” from polygraph examinations. Rather, the requested information was created prior to the date on which the respective examination was to be conducted. Such information is not made confidential under section 1703.306. *See* Open Records Decision No. 478 (1987) (as a general rule, statutory confidentiality requires express language making particular information confidential); *see, e.g.*, Open Records Decision No. 430 (location and cost of polygraph examination not made confidential under predecessor statute). Accordingly, we conclude that the department must release the requested information in its entirety.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the

governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



W. Montgomery Meitler
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

WMM/RWP/sdk

Ref: ID# 156174

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Gerald Cichon
Staff Attorney
CLEAT
747 E. San Antonio, #103
El Paso, Texas 79901
(w/o enclosures)