OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

January 8, 2003

Mr. James M. Frazier, III
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2003-0151

Dear Mr. Frazier:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 174695.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for the investigation pertaining to the requestor's resignation from the department. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.117 and 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and have reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.134 of the Government Code relates to inmates of the department. This exception provides in relevant part:

> (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). Section 552.029 provides, however, that "[n]otwithstanding . . . Section 552.134," eight specified categories of "information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with [the department are] subject to required

disclosure." *See* Gov't Code § 552.029(8). Thus, the legislature explicitly made section 552.134 subject to section 552.029.

Most of the submitted information relates to an investigation of the relationship between a department employee and an inmate of the department. We conclude that section 552.134 is applicable to this information. Furthermore, we find that none of this information is subject to disclosure under section 552.029. We therefore conclude that this information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.134 and must be withheld. However, the submitted resignation letter does not consist of information about an inmate, and thus may not be withheld under section 552.134.

We note that in general, a social security number may be withheld in some circumstances under section 552.117 and under section 552.101 in conjunction with federal law. However, section 552.023 states that a person or a person's authorized representative has a special right of access to information that relates to the person and that is protected from disclosure by laws intended to protect the person's privacy interest. Therefore, the department must release the requestor's social security number to her.[1] The department must also release the remainder of the resignation letter.

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

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[1] Because the requestor's social security number may be confidential with respect to the general public, if the department receives a future request for this information from an individual other than the requestor, the department should again seek a decision from this office.

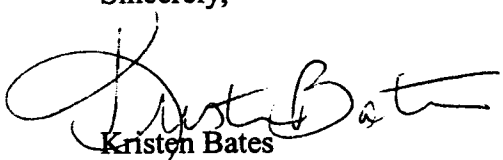
provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to 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); *Texas Department of Public 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,



Kristen Bates
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KAB/seg

Ref: ID# 174695

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Christi Hinkle
731 Jack Street
Seagoville, Texas 75159
(w/o enclosures)