



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 10, 2012

Ms. Laura C. Ingram
Assistant District Attorney
Wichita County
900 Seventh Street
Wichita Falls, Texas 76301-2482

OR2012-00420

Dear Ms. Ingram:

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# 442066.

The Wichita County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for all criminal information regarding a named individual. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions.

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 common-law right to 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 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.

In this instance, the requestor asks for "any and all criminal information" regarding the individual at issue. This request requires the sheriff to compile unspecified law enforcement records concerning the named individual, thus implicating such individual's right to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the sheriff maintains any law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the sheriff must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.¹

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.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, 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 must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Misty Haberer Barham
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MHB/agn

Ref: ID # 442066

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹Because our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.