



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 4, 2020

Ms. Laura Garza Jimenez
County Attorney
Nueces County
901 Leopard, Room 207
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401-3680

OR2020-22438

Dear Ms. Jimenez:

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# 842921.

The Nueces County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for nine categories of information pertaining to certain inmates at the Nueces County Jail.¹ You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses section 236.6 of title 8 of the

¹ The sheriff's office states it received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or overbroad request for information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

² We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Code of Federal Regulations,³ which protects information regarding detainees held on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (the “DHS”).⁴ This section provides as follows:

No person, including any state or local government entity or any privately operated detention facility, that houses, maintains, provides services to, or otherwise holds any detainee on behalf of the Service (whether by contract or otherwise), and no other person who by virtue of any official or contractual relationship with such person obtains information relating to any detainee, shall disclose or otherwise permit to be made public the name of, or other information relating to, such detainee. Such information shall be under the control of the Service and shall be subject to public disclosure only pursuant to the provisions of applicable federal laws, regulations and executive orders. Insofar as any documents or other records contain such information, such documents shall not be public records. This section applies to all persons and information identified or described in it, regardless of when such persons obtained such information, and applies to all requests for public disclosure of such information, including requests that are the subject of proceedings pending as of April 17, 2002.

8 C.F.R. § 236.6; *see also id.* § 1.2 (defining Service as “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and/or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as appropriate in the context in which the term appears”). You assert the submitted information pertains to detainees for purposes of section 236.6. Based upon these representations and our review, we agree the sheriff’s office is required to abide by rules promulgated by the DHS with regard to the detainees. *See id.* § 2.1 (providing that Secretary of Homeland Security may issue regulations to administer and enforce laws relating to immigration and naturalization of aliens); *see also ACLU of N.J., Inc. v. County of Hudson*, 799 A.2d 629 (N.J. 2002) (stating that while state possesses sovereign authority over operation of its jails, it may not operate them, in respect to INS detainees, in any way that derogates federal government’s exclusive and expressed interest in regulating aliens). You do not provide our office with any applicable federal law, regulation, or executive order that provides the requestor with a right of access to the information at issue. We therefore conclude the submitted information is made confidential by section 236.6 of title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Accordingly, the sheriff’s office must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1103(a)(3) of title 8 of the United States Code (providing that the Secretary of Homeland Security shall establish regulations necessary to carry out laws relating to immigration and naturalization) and section 236.6 of title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations. *See ACLU*, 799 A.2d at 655 (concluding that because INS had authority to

³ Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses information that other statutes make confidential. A federal statute or an administrative regulation enacted pursuant to statutory authority can provide statutory confidentiality for purposes of section 552.101. *See* Open Records Decision No. 476 (1987) (addressing statutory predecessor).

⁴ We note the functions of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (“INS”) were transferred to DHS on March 1, 2003. *See* Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135 (2002).

promulgate 8 C.F.R. § 236.6, provision preempts state law requiring disclosure of requested information); *see also English v. Gen. Elec. Co.*, 496 U.S. 72, 79 (1990) (noting that state law is preempted to extent it actually conflicts with federal law); *La. Pub. Serv. Comm'n v. FCC*, 476 U.S. 355, 369 (1986) (noting that federal agency acting within scope of its congressionally delegated authority may preempt state regulation).

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Alexandra C. Burks
Attorney
Open Records Division

ACB/mo

Ref: ID# 842921

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)