

LEGIS

Citizens Now Permitted to See Data on Them in U.S. Agencies

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 26 (AP)—Starting tomorrow, United States citizens will be able to find out what information about them the Government has stored away and able to correct that data if they are erroneous.

The Privacy Act of 1974 also requires Federal Government agencies to disclose the names of their record systems to help citizens find out if their names are listed. It also allows a citizen to find out who has been looking at any particular Government file.

Some 79 agencies have already announced the names of more than 8,000 record systems, including lists of persons whose names have come to the attention of the Justice Department's General Crimes Section in connection with potential or actual cases, payrolls of Government agencies, time records of employees of the Alaska Railroad and lists of persons who have applied for parking space on Government property.

Also among the records listed in some 3,000 pages of material is a Pentagon list of persons who keep pets on military bases—presumably in the event of a rabies threat.

Federal Register officials administering the act estimate that the total number of record systems covered will be more than 8,200.

Summary of Rights

The act requires the Federal Register to publish annually "in a form available to the public at low cost" a compilation of the systems of record and regulations about access to them.

Because the over-all list of record systems would be too complicated for most Americans to check through, the Register plans to publish a condensed digest that will include a brief summary on how to exercise one's rights under the Privacy Act.

The digest will present the following:

¶Names of the various rec-

ord systems maintained by the federal government.

¶Categories of individuals on whom record systems are maintained.

¶Procedures for an individual to follow to obtain further information on any record system covered by the Privacy Act.

The new law, sponsored by former Senator Sam Ervin, Democrat of North Carolina, and Senator Charles H. Percy, Republican of Illinois, was enacted in the wake of Watergate-inspired concerns about Government snooping, and it attempts to limit access to Government files dealing with individuals. As such, its purpose clashes with that of the Freedom of Information Act, which is designed to open Government data to the public.

Lawyers who helped draft the privacy law or the information act say there may be some future problems in making the two laws mesh. For example, a person may make a request under either law. But because there are different exemptions in both acts, a request turned down under the privacy act might be honored if made under the information law.

Exemptions from provisions of the privacy law are police intelligence and investigation data, although criminal records and arrest sheets will be available to the person involved. Also exempt is material relating to employment eligibility, Federal contracts and civil service tests.

There are fines of up to \$5,000 for violations by Government employees, and the law provides authority for individuals to bring damage suits and other civil actions against the Government.

Problems of Draft Evaders

WASHINGTON, Sept. 26 (UPI)—The Federal privacy laws will make it tougher for state and local tax collectors to catch draft evaders from the ranks of the 4.8 million military and Federal employees.

The White House Office of Management and Budget used

Postal Service Keeps List of Mailbox Defects

WASHINGTON, Sept. 26 (AP)—In complying with the Privacy Act of 1974, the Postal Service has let it be known that in district offices, sectional centers and post offices around the country it keeps a file called "Collection and Delivery Records—Mailbox Irregularities."

In the file are the names of "customers whose mailboxes do not comply with Postal Service standards and regulations," the service says.

The act requires that the service explain the purpose and use of its files. The Postal Service says that the purpose of the list is "To provide for the efficient delivery of the mail. The use to which the file is put, its says, is None."

The Postal Service keeps the records for two years "after completed action," which presumably means two years after the mailbox has been brought up to its standards.

to make available to municipalities and to 39 states income data on United States employees and military personnel.

But the privacy act that takes effect tomorrow prohibits Federal agencies from disclosing secret or personal information about individuals without written permission from the involved person.

"It's rather a blow," said Leon Rothenberg, executive secretary of the National Association of Tax Administrators, which represents state and local tax collectors.

Mr. Rothenberg said the Federal data "has been the only source" for local authorities trying to trace military tax evaders, and an aid in finding civilians.