



# NEWS RELEASE

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**Contact:**

CLEAT Public Affairs

E: [news@cleat.org](mailto:news@cleat.org)

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## **CLEAT Priority Legislation Heads to Senate Committee on Criminal Justice**

**AUSTIN, TX**—The Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT) is working with state legislators on key legislation to establish uniform confidentiality standards for law enforcement personnel files and protect officers from misuse of the deadly conduct statute.

For decades, our large urban municipalities and over 130 other municipalities have operated their police and fire departments under Chapter 143 of the Local Government Code, also known as civil service. Civil service brings professional standards to law enforcement as it relates to hiring, firing, and promoting and provides due process for officers.

Unfortunately, department files on Texas law enforcement officers have become a political pawn in recent years, and there is no uniformity across the state on the confidentiality or handling of such files. The release of these records depends on whether the political subdivision has adopted a provision in state law to protect certain information pertaining to a police officer. There are currently thousands of peace officers whose department files, which include items such as background investigations, un-sustained complaints, and developmental memorandums, are confidential under state law, while the other half of Texas peace officers' department files are open to disclosure under Chapter 552 of the Government Code. The loophole has prompted anti-police activist groups to circulate petitions placing illegal ordinances regarding law enforcement personnel files on the ballot, undermining state law.

During the 88th legislative session, as part of the TCOLE Sunset Bill, committees were formed to contemplate and draft policies that all law enforcement agencies shall adopt. One of those policy areas pertained to personnel files, and the final policy adoption by the TCOLE commissioners occurred in April of 2024. The new policy, drafted as a legislative mandate by a committee of stakeholders from law enforcement and non-law enforcement entities, reflects the language and confidentiality provided in Chapter 143 LGC and mandates this provision apply statewide for all law enforcement officers.

“We are proud of the process that took place over the interim to develop a standard for the confidentiality of law enforcement records that is fair and equal to all Texas peace officers who bravely serve our communities,” said CLEAT Deputy Executive Director Jennifer Szimanski. SB 781 by Senator Phil King and HB 2486 by Representative Cole Hefner seeks to codify the model policy.

CLEAT firmly believes a peace officer's departmental files should carry the same level of confidentiality across the state.

The organization also worked with Chairman Cole Hefner and Senator Phil King on SB 1637/HB 2436, which more clearly defines how the deadly conduct statute applies to law enforcement officers. “The weaponization of this broad statute against law enforcement officers doing their job and executing their sworn duties must come to an end,” said CLEAT Executive Director Robert Leonard. The organization has expended a tremendous amount of resources defending its members against rogue District Attorneys who have been able to secure indictments against officers on a deadly conduct charge. At least one resulted in a conviction, and CLEAT has retained an appellate lawyer in that case.

Both bills will be heard on Tuesday, March 25th, by the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice.

**About CLEAT:** *Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT) is the largest law enforcement union in Texas, dedicated to providing legal protection, legislative advocacy, and professional support for law enforcement professionals statewide and consisting of over 28,000 members. With a commitment to protecting the rights of officers and ensuring they have the resources needed to serve their communities effectively, CLEAT stands at the forefront of law enforcement representation. For more information, visit [www.cleat.org](http://www.cleat.org).*

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