

## Class Review – Partner Review - “Privacy and Information”

### Information Security

Mr. Russell

1. List two private databases that probably have information about you. For each one, tell what service or benefit, if any, you got in exchange for providing information about yourself.
2. Consider the three aspects of privacy. Give examples of situations where they would not be absolute.
3. A city government wants to track down people who run small businesses and do not pay the city's \$125 business license fee. The city has hired a private detective to obtain IRS tax records of city residents and determine who has reported small business income to the IRS but not paid for a license.
  - (a) List all the arguments you can think of that the city government might give in support of this action.
  - (b) List all the arguments you can think of that privacy advocates might give against it.
  - (c) Do you think this kind of "information sharing" between the IRS and a city government should be permitted or prohibited? Give your reasons.
4. Suppose a small political party strongly opposes an existing law, for example, the income tax or the law against smoking marijuana. Consider the possibility of allowing government agencies like the IRS and the FBI to use the voter registration database (which includes a person's party affiliation in some states) to initiate investigations of party members to see if they comply with the existing laws. Give arguments in favor of this; give arguments in opposition. Which side do you think is stronger? Why?
5. Some IRS employees are authorized to obtain credit reports from credit bureaus (for official use by the agency). The IRS found that the employees were illegally accessing people's credit reports for their own purposes at a significant rate. Suggest some procedural measures to reduce this problem. Suggest appropriate penalties for violations.
6. Many states sell voter registration records on tape or disk. In some states, the records include the political party each registrant belongs to and the elections in which he or she voted. Which of the disclosure options do you think should apply? Why?
7. When formulating a policy on whether certain government records should be open to the public, we should distinguish between personal preferences and general principles. Consider motor vehicle records. Try to formulate a policy about access to the database by the news media that covers both a newspaper trying to get home addresses from vehicle license plate numbers for cars parked at an abortion clinic and a newspaper trying to get home addresses from vehicle license plate numbers for cars parked at a Ku Klux Klan rally.
8. Computer chips are being implanted into pets and farm animals so they can be identified if they get lost. Some people suggest using the same technology for children. Discuss the privacy implications of such proposals. What are the risks? Do the benefits outweigh the risks? If there were a bill in Congress to require ID chips in children, would you support it? Why?
9. We noted that that Consumers Union, publisher of *Consumer Reports*, uses a huge mailing list broker to find potential customers, but *Consumer Reports* does not give information on its subscribers to the list broker. First take the position that their behavior is inconsistent and hypocritical. Give all the arguments you can think of for this position. Then take the position that the policy is reasonable. Give arguments for this position. Finally, tell which side you think is more persuasive. Which principles or points are most important?
10. Give arguments in favor of and opposed to a law to require that credit bureaus send a copy of each person's credit report to the person once a year (without charge).