



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 12, 2017

Constable Jason Johnson
Custodian of Records
Kaufman County Constable's Office, Precinct 2
200 East Main Street
Forney, Texas 76126

OR2017-10254

Dear Mr. Johnson:

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# 658876.

The Kaufman County Constable's Office, Precinct 2 (the "constable's office") received a request for information regarding two named individuals and specified incidents.¹ You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we must address the obligations of the constable's office under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedures a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples,

¹As you have not submitted a copy of the request for information, we take our description from your brief.

labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *See id.* § 552.301(e). The constable's office states it received the instant request for information on February 9, 2017. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office a copy of the written request for information. Accordingly, we conclude the constable's office failed to comply with the procedural requirements mandated by section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). You claim section 552.108 of the Government Code for the submitted information. We note some of the submitted information is subject to sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code.² Because sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code can provide compelling reasons to overcome the presumption of openness, we will address the applicability of these sections to the submitted information. However, we find you have failed to establish a compelling reason to address the exception you claim.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." *See* Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Id.* at 682. The court of appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). Thus, the constable's office must withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the constable's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

In summary, the constable's office must withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The constable's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The constable's office must release the remaining information.³

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Ian Lancaster
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

IML/sb

Ref: ID# 658876

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

³The information being released contains social security numbers. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. See Gov't Code § 552.147(b).