



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 15, 2018

Ms. Michelle Buendia  
Assistant City Attorney  
Criminal Law and Police Division  
City of Dallas  
1400 South Lamar  
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2018-03672

Dear Ms. Buendia:

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# 699403 (ORR # D004400).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for all information pertaining to a specified incident. You state the department will release some information to the requestor. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note, and you acknowledge, the department failed to meet the statutory deadlines imposed by section 552.301 of the Government Code for requesting a ruling from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). 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, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ).

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<sup>1</sup>Although your brief does not raise section 552.101, we understand you to raise this exception based on your markings.

The need of a governmental body, other than the governmental body that failed to timely seek an open records decision, to withhold information under section 552.108 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason sufficient to overcome the presumption of openness. *See* Open Records Decision No. 586 (1991). Because the department informs us, and provides documentation showing, the Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") objects to the release of the submitted information, we will consider whether the department may withhold the submitted information on behalf of the district attorney's office under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Additionally, section 552.101 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness. Therefore, we will consider the applicability of this exception to the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information pertains to a pending criminal investigation or prosecution. Further, the district attorney's office objects to the release of the information because it relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon this representation and our review, we conclude release of the information you marked will interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (delineating law enforcement interests present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Accordingly, the department may withhold the information you marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney's office.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section 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 Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *See 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.). Upon review, we find the department must withhold the remaining dates of birth you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

In summary, the department may withhold the information you marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney's office. The

department must withhold the remaining dates of birth you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must release the remaining information.

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](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,



Katherine Stark  
Attorney  
Open Records Division

KS/eb

Ref: ID# 699403

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)