



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 15, 2019

Mr. Gabriel A. Rodriguez
Assistant City Attorney
City of Corpus Christi
P.O. Box 9277
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469-9277

OR2019-04446

Dear Mr. Rodriguez:

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# 751049 (ORR# JGay1).

The Corpus Christi Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. The department claims some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.130, 552.147, and 552.152 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions and reviewed the submitted information.

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. 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 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.). The requestor has a right of access to his own date of birth pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code § 552.023(a)*; Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning

themselves). Nevertheless, the department must withhold the remaining dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a]n internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution . . . if (1) release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(b)(1). This section is intended to protect “information which, if released, would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State.” *City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320, 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.). This office has concluded this provision protects certain kinds of information, the disclosure of which might compromise the security or operations of a law enforcement agency. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 3-4 (1989) (detailed guidelines regarding police department’s use of force policy), 508 at 3-4 (1988) (information relating to future transfers of prisoners), 413 (1984) (sketch showing security measures for forthcoming execution). However, to claim this aspect of section 552.108 protection a governmental body must meet its burden of explaining how and why release of the information at issue would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990). Further, commonly known policies and techniques may not be withheld under section 552.108. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 2-3 (former section 552.108 does not protect Penal Code provisions, common-law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force), 252 at 3 (1980) (governmental body did not meet burden because it did not indicate why investigative procedures and techniques submitted were any different from those commonly known with law enforcement and crime prevention). To prevail on its claim that section 552.108(b)(1) excepts information from disclosure, a law-enforcement agency must do more than merely make a conclusory assertion that releasing the information would interfere with law enforcement. The determination of whether the release of particular records would interfere with law enforcement is made on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 409 at 2 (1984). Upon review, we find the department has failed to establish the release of any of the remaining information would interfere with law enforcement. Therefore, the department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.108(b)(1).

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. Because section 552.130 protects personal privacy, the requestor has a right of access to his own motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See id.* § 552.023(a); ORD 481 at 4. However, the department must withhold the remaining motor vehicle record information, which it has marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

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 under the Act. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b). Because section 552.147 protects personal privacy, the requestor has a right of access to his own social security number pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See id.* § 552.023(a); ORD 481 at 4. However, the department may withhold the remaining social security numbers it has marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Section 552.152 of the Government Code provides the following:

Information in the custody of a governmental body that relates to an employee or officer of the governmental body is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if, under the specific circumstances pertaining to the employee or officer, disclosure of the information would subject the employee or officer to a substantial threat of physical harm.

Gov't Code § 552.152. The department represents the information it has marked under section 552.152 identifies undercover officers and its release would subject the officers to a "substantial threat of physical harm." Upon review, we find the department has demonstrated release of the information at issue would subject the officers to a substantial threat of physical harm. Therefore, we conclude the department must withhold the information it has marked under section 552.152 of the Government Code.

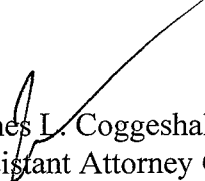
In summary, with the exception of the information pertaining to the requestor, the department must withhold the dates of birth it has marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy, must withhold the motor vehicle record information it has marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code, and may withhold the social security numbers it has marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information it has marked under section 552.152 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.

Finally, the department asks this office to issue a previous determination authorizing it to withhold the names of undercover narcotics police officers or an officer working in an undercover capacity under section 552.152 of the Government Code without requesting a decision from this office. *See* Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001). We decline to issue such a previous determination at this time. Accordingly, 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 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,



James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/eb

Ref: ID# 751049

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)