



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 15, 2019

Ms. Barbara Armstrong  
Executive Managing Attorney  
Harris County  
1019 Congress, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2019-19016

Dear Ms. Armstrong:

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# 781085 (C.A. File No 19PIA0435).

The Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct Four, (the "constable's office") received two requests for information pertaining to a specified incident. The constable's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

We note the submitted information pertains to an alleged violation of section 32.51 of the Penal Code, which provides "[a] person commits an offense if the person, with the intent to harm or defraud another, obtains, possesses, transfers, or uses an item of . . . identifying information of another person without the other person's consent[.]" Penal Code § 32.51(b)(1). For purposes of section 32.51, "identifying information" includes an individual's name and financial institution account number. *Id.* § 32.51(a)(1)(A), (C). Article 2.29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure pertains to alleged violations of section 32.51 that occurred on or after September 1, 2005, and provides:

(a) A peace officer to whom an alleged violation of Section 32.51, Penal Code, is reported shall make a written report to the law enforcement agency that employs the peace officer that includes the following information:

- (1) the name of the victim;
- (2) the name of the suspect, if known;
- (3) the type of identifying information obtained, possessed, transferred, or used in violation of Section 32.51, Penal Code; and
- (4) the results of any investigation.

(b) On the victim's request, the law enforcement agency shall provide the report created under Subsection (a) to the victim. In providing the report, the law enforcement agency shall redact any otherwise confidential information that is included in the report, other than the information described by Subsection (a).

Crim. Proc. Code art. 2.29. For purposes of article 2.29, an offense is committed on or after September 1, 2005, if no "element of the offense occurs before that date." Act of June 17, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., ch. 294, § 1(b), 2005 Tex. Gen. Laws 885.

The submitted information pertains to a report of fraudulent use or possession of identifying information, which constitutes a violation of section 32.51. The first requestor in this instance is the victim named in the report, and the second requestor is the attorney for the first. The alleged offense occurred after September 1, 2005. Therefore, the submitted report is subject to article 2.29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See* Crim. Proc. Code art. 2.29. Although the constable's office seeks to withhold the report under section 552.108 of the Government Code, this exception does not make information confidential. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions), 586 (1991) (governmental body may waive section 552.108). Accordingly, the constable's office may not withhold the submitted report from these requestors under section 552.108 of the Government Code. However, because sections 552.101 and 552.130 make information confidential, we will address their applicability to the submitted information.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person,

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<sup>1</sup>The 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).

and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. 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.). However, we note the requestors have a right of access to private information pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code* § 552.023(a) ("person's authorized representative has special right of access, beyond right of general public, to information held by governmental body that relates to person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests"); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning himself). Therefore, with the exception of the first requestor's date of birth, 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.

In summary, with the exception of the first requestor's date of birth, 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

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<sup>2</sup>We note the requestors have a right of access to the information being released in this instance. Thus, if the constable's office receives another request for the same information from a different requestor, the constable's office must again seek a decision from this office.

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,



Jesse Harvey  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JH/jxd

Ref: ID# 781085

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors  
(w/o enclosures)