



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 13, 2019

Ms. Chantal Wall  
Records Unit  
Victoria County Sheriff's Office  
101 North Glass Street  
Victoria, Texas 77901

OR2019-31970

Dear Ms. Wall:

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# 804252.

The Victoria County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified arrest report. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a) 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: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, 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 information at issue relates to an ongoing criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, we conclude the release of the information at issue would 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. CHouston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref=d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the information at issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Although you do not cite section 552.147 of the Government Code in your brief, we understand you to raise this exception based upon your markings.

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. See 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; see also Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). We note basic information includes, among other items, the names of arresting and investigating officers. See ORD 127 at 3-4. Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, the sheriff’s office may withhold the information you marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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 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.). We note the requestor has a right of access to his own date of birth. See Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (“person or 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 herself). Therefore, the sheriff’s office may not withhold the date of birth you marked 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. We note, because section 552.130 protects privacy interests, the requestor has a right of access to his own motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code. See Gov’t Code § 552.023; ORD 481 at 4. Therefore, the sheriff’s office may not withhold the information you marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Section 552.147(a) of the Government Code excepts the social security number of a living individual from public disclosure. Gov’t Code § 552.147(a). As noted above, however, the requestor has a right of access to information pertaining to himself that would otherwise be private. See *id.* § 552.023; ORD 481 at 4. Therefore, the sheriff’s office may not withhold requestor’s social security number under section 552.147(a) of the Government Code.

We note some of the basic information may be subject to section 552.152 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> Section 552.152 provides:

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

Information in the custody of a governmental body that relates to an employee or officer of the governmental body is excepted from [required public disclosure] 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. You seek to withhold the identity of an undercover officer. You represent the release of the undercover officer's identity would subject the officer to a substantial threat of physical harm. Therefore, we find section 552.152 is applicable to the identity of the undercover officer within the information at issue. Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the identifying information of the undercover officer, which you marked, under section 552.152 of the Government Code.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the sheriff's office may withhold the information you marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing basic information, the sheriff's office must withhold the identifying information of the undercover officer you marked under section 552.152 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must release the remaining information.<sup>3</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.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Kieran Hillis  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KH/mo

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<sup>3</sup> We note the requestor has a right of access to some of the information being released under section 552.023 of the Government Code. See Gov't Code § 552.023; ORD 481 at 4. Accordingly, if the sheriff's office receives another request for this same information from a different requestor, the sheriff's office must again seek a ruling from this office.

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)