



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 3, 2020

Ms. Mary E. Miller
Assistant District Attorney
Denton County Sheriff's Office
127 North Woodrow Lane, Suite 300
Denton, Texas 76205

OR2020-19244

Dear Ms. Miller:

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# 840157 (ORR# S003804).

The Denton County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for records related to a named individual. The sheriff's office states it is releasing some of the requested information. The sheriff's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the sheriff's office claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "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, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, 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. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). 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.).

Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy of an individual is withheld. However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved as well as the nature of certain incidents, the entire report must be withheld to protect the individual's privacy. The sheriff's office seeks to withhold the entirety of the submitted information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, the sheriff's office has not demonstrated, nor does it otherwise appear, this is a situation in which the entirety of the information at issue must be withheld on the basis of common-law privacy. Accordingly, the sheriff's office may not withhold the entirety of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis. Upon review, we find some of the submitted information, which we marked, satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff's office must also withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find the sheriff's office has not demonstrated any of the remaining information at issue is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Thus, the sheriff's office may not withhold any portion of the remaining information under section 552.101 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 sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information it marked and we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we marked, as well as all public citizens' dates of birth, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information it marked and we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office 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 <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,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/be

Ref: ID# 840157

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)