



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 7, 2020

Mr. Robert Schell  
Assistant Ellis County & District Attorney  
County of Ellis  
109 South Jackson  
Waxahachie, Texas 75165

OR2020-30499

Dear Mr. Schell:

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# 856862.

The Ellis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim 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.). Thus, the sheriff's office must withhold the public citizens' dates of birth you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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). The sheriff's office states the information it marked pertains to an active criminal investigation or prosecution. Based on 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.—Houston [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, the sheriff's office may withhold the information it marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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, with the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information you marked and the additional information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Upon review, however, we find the information we marked for release does not consist of motor vehicle record information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code. Therefore, the sheriff's office may not withhold the information we marked for release under section 552.130.

In summary, the sheriff's office must withhold the public citizens' dates of birth you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff's office may withhold the information it marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. With the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information you marked and the additional information 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,

Meagan Hunter  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MH/rm

Mr. Robert Schell - Page 3

Ref: ID# 856862

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)