



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 10, 2022

Ms. Victoria Jimenez  
Public Information Officer  
Harris County Sheriff's Office  
1200 Baker Street  
Houston, Texas 77002-1206

OR2022-13279

Dear Ms. Jimenez:

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# 946577 (ORR# 22SO9002563).

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified incident report. The sheriff's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception 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, 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 the *Industrial Foundation* decision. *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.). The sheriff's office must withhold the submitted dates of birth under section 552.101 of the

Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. We also find some of the remaining information, which we have marked, satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in the *Industrial Foundation* decision. Accordingly, the sheriff's office must also withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, the remaining information is not confidential under common-law privacy, and the sheriff's office may not withhold it under section 552.101 on that ground.

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.<sup>1</sup> See Gov't Code § 552.130. The sheriff's office must withhold the submitted license plate and vehicle identification numbers and issuing state under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the sheriff's office must withhold the submitted dates of birth and the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff's office must withhold the submitted license plate and vehicle identification numbers and issuing state 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,

James L. Coggeshall  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JLC/jm

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 at 2 (1987), 480 at 5 (1987).

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)