



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 7, 2006

Mr. Ernesto Rodriguez
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
City of El Paso
2 Civic Center Plaza, 9th Floor
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2006-05980

Dear Mr. Rodriguez:

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# 250806.

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for information regarding a specified incident. You state that you have released some of the requested information, but claim that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.130, and 552.147 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. This section encompasses the common law right to privacy, which protects information if it is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, such that its release would be highly objectionable to a person of ordinary sensibilities, and (2) of no legitimate public interest. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668 (Tex. 1976). The type of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683.

In Open Records Decision No. 339 (1982), we concluded that a sexual assault victim has a common law privacy interest which prevents disclosure of information that would identify

the victim. *See also Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied) (identity of witnesses to and victims of sexual harassment was highly intimate or embarrassing information and public did not have a legitimate interest in such information). Accordingly, we have marked the identifying information of the alleged sexual assault victim that you must withhold pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with common law privacy. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982).*

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure information that relates to:

- (1) a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state;
- (2) a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state; or
- (3) a personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or a local agency authorized to issue an identification document.

Gov't Code § 552.130. Therefore, the department must withhold the Texas driver's license and personal identification numbers we have marked pursuant to section 552.130.

Section 552.147 of the Government Code provides that "[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from" required public disclosure under the Act. *Id.* § 552.147. Therefore, the department must withhold the submitted social security numbers under section 552.147.¹

In summary, we conclude that the department must withhold the following: (1) the marked identifying information of the alleged sexual assault victim pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common law privacy; (2) the marked Texas driver's license and personal identification numbers pursuant to section 552.130 of the Government Code; and (3) the submitted social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code. The remaining submitted information must be released to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited

¹We note that section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 342 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Caroline E. Cho
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CEC/sdk

Ref: ID# 250806

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Justo Fernandez-Gonzalez
8811 Mercury
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(w/o enclosures)