



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 28, 2007

Mr. David Walker
County Attorney
Montgomery County
207 West Phillips, 1st Floor
Conroe, Texas 77301

OR2007-02377

Dear Mr. Walker:

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# 272494.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a specified 911 telephone call. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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 common-law right to privacy. Common-law privacy protects information that 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. *See Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (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. 540 S.W.2d at 683. In addition, this office has found that some kinds of medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses is excepted from required public disclosure under common law privacy. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 470 (1987) (illness from severe emotional and job-related stress), 455 (1987) (prescription drugs, illnesses, operations, and physical handicaps).* Generally, only highly intimate information

that implicates the privacy of an individual is excepted under section 552.101. However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated that the requestor knows the identity of the individual whose privacy is implicated, all the information at issue must be withheld to protect that individual's privacy.

You argue that the submitted information should be withheld in its entirety because the requestor know the identity of an individual whose privacy is implicated in the submitted information. However, upon review of your arguments and the information before us, we are unable to conclude that the requestor knows the identity of this individual. Nevertheless, the submitted materials include information about this individual, which we have identified, that is protected by common-law privacy and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code. However, if the department lacks the technical capability to redact this private information from the submitted recording, the department must withhold this recording in its entirety. *See* Open Records Decision No. 364 (1983).

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by a Texas agency is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). The department must withhold the Texas driver's license number we have marked under section 552.130.

In summary, we have identified the information that is protected by common-law privacy and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code. However, if the department lacks the technical capability to redact this private information from the submitted recording, the department must withhold this recording in its entirety. We have marked the submitted information that must be withheld under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining submitted information must be released.

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 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).

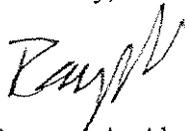
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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*, 842 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,



Ramsey A. Abarca
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RAA/eb

Ref: ID# 272494

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Jennifer Hardwick
29702 Sullivan Oaks
Spring, Texas 77386
(w/o enclosures)