



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

May 18, 2011

Ms. Luz E. Sandoval-Walker  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of El Paso  
2 Civic Center Plaza, 9th Floor  
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2011-06977

Dear Ms. Sandoval-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# 419193.

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified case number. 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. This section encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if it (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *See Industrial Found. v. Texas 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 demonstrated. *See id.* at 681-82.

The types 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. *See id.* Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy of an individual is withheld. However, in

certain instances, where it is demonstrated that 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.

In this instance, although you seek to withhold the submitted information in its entirety, you have not demonstrated, nor does it otherwise appear, this is a situation where the entirety of the information must be withheld on the basis of common-law privacy. Accordingly, the submitted information may not be withheld in its entirety under common-law privacy. However, upon review, we have marked portions of the report that are highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find none of the remaining information is intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate concern. Therefore, none of the remaining information may be withheld on this basis.

We also understand you to raise section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with constitutional privacy for the remaining information. Constitutional privacy consists of two interrelated types of privacy: (1) the right to make certain kinds of decisions independently and (2) an individual's interest in avoiding disclosure of personal matters. *See Whalen v. Roe*, 429 U.S. 589, 599-600 (1977); Open Records Decision Nos. 600 at 3-5 (1992), 478 at 4 (1987), 455 at 3-7 (1987). The first type protects an individual's autonomy within "zones of privacy" which include matters related to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, and child rearing and education. ORD 455 at 4. The second type of constitutional privacy requires a balancing between the individual's privacy interests and the public's need to know information of public concern. *Id.* at 7. The scope of information protected is narrower than that under the common-law doctrine of privacy; constitutional privacy under section 552.101 is reserved for "the most intimate aspects of human affairs." *Id.* at 5 (quoting *Ramie v. City of Hedwig Village, Tex.*, 765 F.2d 490 (5th Cir. 1985)). Upon review, we find you have not demonstrated how any of the remaining information falls within the zones of privacy. Thus, no portion of the remaining information may be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with constitutional privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information related to a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state or a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state.<sup>1</sup> *See Gov't Code*

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<sup>1</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

§ 552.130(a)(1), (2). Accordingly, the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy and section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released to the requestor.

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 [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Sarah Casterline  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

SEC/eb

Ref: ID# 419193

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>2</sup>We note Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009) was issued by this office as a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information, including a Texas license plate number under section 552.130 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.