



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 24, 2011

Mr. Gregory A. Alicie
Open Records Specialist
Baytown Police Department
3200 North Main Street
Baytown, Texas 77521

OR2011-07305

Dear Mr. Alicie:

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# 418888.

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified accident report. You state you will redact social security numbers and partial social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147(b) of the Government Code.¹ You claim that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 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 common-law right of 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. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas

¹Section 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. See Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* include 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. This office has found some kinds of medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses are 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). Upon review, we find the information you have marked is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Therefore, the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses constitutional privacy. 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. ORD 455 at 4. 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. *Id.* 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.* The scope of information protected is narrower than that under the common-law doctrine of privacy; the information must concern the "most intimate aspects of human affairs." *Id.* at 5 (citing *Ramie v. City of Hedwig Village, Texas*, 765 F.2d 490 (5th Cir. 1985)). In Open Records Decision No. 430 (1985), our office determined a list of inmate visitors is protected by constitutional privacy because people have a First Amendment right to correspond with prisoners, and the release of such information would threaten that right. Accordingly, the department must withhold the inmate visitor information you have marked, as well as the additional information we have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with constitutional privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information [that] relates to . . . a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state[.]" Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(2). Accordingly, the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have marked pursuant to section 552.130.²

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

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

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, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Casterline', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sarah Casterline
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SEC/eb

Ref: ID# 418888

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)