



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 9, 2006

Mr. Galen Gatten
Assistant City Attorney
City of Midland
P.O. Box 1152
Midland, Texas 79702

OR2006-01360

Dear Mr. Gatten:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code, the Public Information Act (the "Act"). Your request was assigned ID# 242040.

The Midland Police Department (the "department") received a request for a copy of a specified offense report. The requestor has narrowed the scope of her request to exclude any driver's license numbers contained in the offense report. 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." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code provides as follows:

(a) The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

(1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and

(2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

After reviewing your arguments and the submitted information, we conclude that the department has failed to demonstrate that the information at issue was used or developed in an investigation of child abuse. Accordingly, we cannot find that this information falls within the scope of section 261.202 and it may not be withheld on that basis.

We note, however, that the submitted information contains social security numbers. Section 552.147 of the Government Code¹ provides that “[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from” required public disclosure under the Act.² Therefore, the department must withhold one of the social security numbers contained in the submitted information under section 552.147.³ We note, however, that section 552.147 protects personal privacy interests. Thus, the requestor has a right of access to her son’s social security number. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.023(a); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself).

In summary, the department must withhold the marked social security number under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.⁴

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

¹Added by Act of May 23, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., S.B. 1485, ch. 397, 2005 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 1091 (Vernon) (to be codified at Tex. Gov’t Code § 552.147).

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.147 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

³We 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.

⁴We note that because the requestor has a special right of access to her son’s social security number, the department must again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for the same information from another requestor.

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).

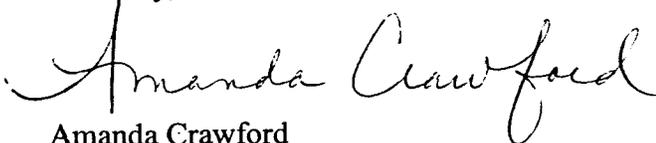
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records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



Amanda Crawford
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AEC/segh

Mr. Galen Gatten - Page 4

Ref: ID# 242040

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Natalie Kappes
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(w/o enclosures)