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Tracing Home Address Exemptions in State FOI Laws

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Abstract

Privacy concerns have prompted many states to close off once-public information from release through the freedom of information process. This study looks at the personal privacy exemptions for home addresses in 50 states and Washington, D.C., in both 2011 and 2019. There were 16 instances of a change in state law during that time – only three toward more transparency. Voter registration records were the most open of the three categories reviewed, with more than half the states requiring disclosure of home addresses in 2019. This study can help guide journalists, policy makers and records holders as they navigate proposed changes to FOI laws.

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Introduction

In a December 2018 editorial, the *New York Times* declared that the public availability of home addresses has become a potential tool to harm people. “Times have changed,” the editorial board wrote, “and the information provided by these new online databases aren’t weaponized only by trolls, but also by stalkers, domestic abusers and criminals” (“Opinion: Home Addresses,” 2018). It’s an example of a once-public record being reconsidered in the Internet era – and a hot-button issue among privacy advocates and those who fear government is becoming too closed off.

In an age of big data and easy access to information online, personal information gathered by governmental agencies has the potential to become public in ways previously unimaginable. With changes in technology, more information has become searchable and widely accessible. Databases and algorithms make it easier than ever to match up discrete pieces of information with identifying details, further adding to privacy concerns. This growing access has been met with growing apprehension about personal privacy (McCall, 2018; McDermott, 2017). The more concerned about privacy the public becomes, the more likely officials will respond by closing off open records laws (Cuillier, 2004, 2017).

Because of the complex nature and variety of state laws, however, limited research has compared the text of state laws across the country (Chamberlin, Popescu, Weigold, & Laughner, 2007). This study looks at open records laws in the context of personal privacy – specifically how state laws deal with the disclosure of home addresses. This information has traditionally been seen as basic directory information (Byrne, 2010; Harper, 2006), and therefore serves as a proxy for growing concerns about personal privacy. Using a color scale to measure the approach to public records, this study provides a quick comparison guide for journalists, policymakers and records-holders to understand exactly how states treat home addresses for three records types: Personnel Records, Firearms Applications and Permits, and Voter Registration Lists. The results provide important context for why certain records are exempt from disclosure, and a comparison for how states approach the balance of private versus public information. That context can help states make more careful decisions about records dealing with personal information, so as to more appropriately balance the public’s right to know with the individual need for personal privacy.

Literature review

Freedom of information laws

The 1966 federal Freedom of Information Act gives the public the “right to request access to records from any federal agency” (Department of Justice, n.d., “About page”), where the Constitution and the First Amendment don’t explicitly allow for it (Schauer, 2018). When members of the public seek information about state or municipal governments, however, they must turn to one of 51 different laws covering open government in 50 states and the District of Columbia. These laws (herein referred to under the umbrella of “freedom of information (FOI)” laws) dictate access to records and meetings within the respective states. Despite the adoption of FOI laws in each state and at the federal level, the public does not have completely open access to records. Each law comes with some form of exemptions – scenarios where public officials can or must withhold information. These exemptions range from general to specific, depending on the state, and include topics ranging from trade secrets to personal information (Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, 2019). Public officials routinely take advantage of the exemptions

outlined in state laws, according to a survey of 228 Freedom of Information experts, which found about 87% had some problem with agencies overusing exemptions to the laws: 23% called it “somewhat problematic,” 30.5% called it “very problematic” and 34.3% called it “extremely problematic” (Cuillier, 2017).

Personal privacy

Personal privacy is multifaceted and complex, and no single definition fully serves the different perspectives. Smith, Dinev, and Xu (2011) distinguish between physical privacy, such as concerns about others seeing into personal space, and information privacy, regarding communications from, and details about, a person. Even under the umbrella of information privacy, different disciplines have different definitions of privacy, including privacy as a right, privacy as a commodity, privacy as a state of being, and privacy as a form of control over information about oneself (Smith et al., 2011, p. 994-995).

It is problematic to define control over information because sometimes a person might want to keep information private, but there are legitimate reasons to disclose that information to the public (Swanson, 2009). At the same time, the perception of what should remain private varies from person to person. Lane (2009) notes Americans’ different levels of disclosure on early communication platforms, such as postcards and telegrams. “The sheer variety of personal disclosures makes it clear that it is next to impossible to create a ‘right to privacy’ that encompasses every type of personal disclosure; what one person might consider a trivial disclosure, another might find mortifying” (Lane, 2009, p. 32).

Since Warren and Brandeis (1890) outlined a right to personal privacy, countless articles have addressed privacy concerns and the potential conflict with open government. Some (Solove, 2002) argue that personal information contained within public documents is not necessary to release in order to allow for transparent actions from governmental agencies. The way information is stored may prompt privacy concerns as well, such as when information from several different records is compiled into a single database (*DOJ v. Reporters Committee*, 1989). Others look at the public good that can come from knowing even personal details. For example, Boles (2012) argues that access to death certificates helps the public by allowing closure for extended family members, giving the public a chance to review trends in deaths and medical malpractice, and allowing for historical research. Swanson (2009) argued for the need for some personal information to become public, and proposed a balancing test for disclosure rather than a test for withholding that information. “Personal information allows people to make judgments about whether to trust or associate with someone; more truthful information leads to more informed decisions” (p. 1607). Her balancing test gives preference to the public use of the information, and the impact it has on others. Records that “substantially impacts others” and do not “conflict with the primary purpose of the practice at issue with the record” should be disclosed under the test (p. 1603).

Several states address privacy in their FOI laws with catchall exemptions that balance personal privacy with the public’s right to know. The definitions often include phrases such as “clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy,” and “highly personal or objectionable to a reasonable person and in which the subject’s right to privacy outweighs any legitimate public interest in obtaining the information,” such as in Illinois’ law (Illinois). In Kansas, privacy is defined as “revealing information that would be highly offensive to a reasonable person, including information that may pose a risk to a person or property and is not of legitimate concern to the

public” (KSA 45-217(b)). These definitions leave the interpretation to the records holders, or ultimately, the courts.

Personally identifying information

When dealing with privacy, often the issue concerns personally identifying information, such as address, phone number, and Social Security Number. Some researchers (Byrne, 2010; Harper, 2006) consider personally identifying information such as home addresses as basic directory information. However, there is a growing sentiment that access to such information has a potential for harm (McCall, 2018; “Opinion: Home Addresses,” 2018), or at a minimum, is not publicly necessary to release (Department of Defense, 1994).

The 1994 Driver’s Privacy Protection Act was an early recognition by governmental agencies that releasing private citizens’ personally identifying information could lead to stalking and harassment (Karras, 1999). More recently, in a December 2018 report, the Oregon Public Records Advocate outlined three main concerns – identity theft, doxxing, and swatting – to releasing personally identifiable information (McCall). In particular, doxxing and swatting relate to home addresses. Doxxing is collecting and publishing documents about a person, often revealing personal information (McNealy, 2018). The act can result in threats to the individual, including those where people show up at the address of the victim (McCall, 2018). Swatting involves calling 911 to send police or SWAT teams to a person’s home when there is no real emergency (FBI, 2013). Because of these concerns, many states allow residents to opt out of disclosure of their home addresses for specific reasons, including concerns about personal safety (Shoemyer, 2009).

Based on the concerns by the public and policymakers of the release of home addresses in government records, and concern by FOI advocates that closure of this very information can harm the public good, this study seeks to answer the following two questions:

RQ1: How do states treat home addresses as a publicly disclosable record?

RQ2: At the state level, what changes have occurred between 2011 and 2019?

Methodology

Comparing individual aspects of open records laws across states is difficult because of the unique way each state handles its law. Appeals court decisions, state statutes and state constitutions each impact the final interpretation and implementation of individual state laws. Additionally, some states have exemptions that provide a balancing test for records. Meanwhile, not all states require record holders to withhold all documents listed in the exemption sections. For example, in North Dakota exempt records “may be withheld at the discretion of the public entity” while confidential records “cannot be released” (North Dakota Office of Attorney General, 2016, p. 2).

Because of these complications, past comparisons of state FOI laws typically fall into four categories: Rankings based on selected criteria (Better Government Association, 2008, 2013); in-depth reviews of individual state laws and their connection to personal privacy (Byrne, 2010; Farro, 2014; Rydell, 2011); cross-state FOI compliance checks, (Fink, 2018); and analyses of a narrow exemption from a sample of state laws (Boles, 2012; Swanson, 2009). This review seeks to expand on this last category by looking at exemptions for three record types across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. While this slice of information may seem limited, it provides a glimpse at how all states handle the same information.

To address the research questions, this study used three phases of analysis, relying primarily on the Open Government Guide published by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in 2011, and the updated guide published in January 2019. First, the laws in 50 states and Washington, D.C., were reviewed through thematic analysis, which is “useful for summarizing key features of a large data set” (Nowell et al, 2017, p.2) and provides flexibility for situations such as the comparison of disparate state laws. The thematic analysis helped organize the different approaches states take to disclosure or exemptions in all records. More specifically, states can always exempt release of a record, have a balancing test to determine if a record should be disclosed, exempt the release of a record in certain specific situations or for specific people, or always require the release of a record.

Second, using those themes, a content analysis of each individual law, as published in the 2011 and 2019 Open Government Guides, was conducted. This content analysis quantified how states specifically approach disclosure of home addresses for Personnel Records, Firearms Permits, and Voter Registration Lists. These records were chosen for two reasons. First, the Open Government Guide specifically analyzes each type of record, which helped make a comparison across states. Second, the three types of records represent different types of home address disclosure. For Personnel Records, the home addresses are included in records that do not necessarily deal with public actions or decisions. With Firearms Permits, home addresses are included with records as a basis of governmental regulation of a matter of public concern. Firearms Permits straddle the balance of public concern over who has been granted access to legally use weapons and the individual desire for privacy about a tool used for personal protection (Swanson, 2009). Voter Registration Lists include information of the highest level of democratic value, as they deal directly with the public’s ability to weigh in on decisions of elected officials and public spending. Especially in light of recent concerns about voter registration (Wines, 2016; Graham, 2016; Farley & Robertson, 2018), home addresses in these records are arguably more important for the public to access than, say, Personnel Records.

Finally, the completed list of exemptions for each state was sent to an FOI expert in that state for verification. The experts included lawyers, journalists, and other open government advocates. They were chosen from the contact information listed on the National Freedom of Information Coalition website under each state’s FOI resources. In some cases, the request for verification was forwarded to another expert not listed on the website. A total of 17 responses were received, and in some cases, information in the data was updated to reflect more nuanced details than those that were available in the Reporters Committee Open Government Guide. When information was added to the analysis, a note is included in the comments in the appendix.

The access to home addresses for the three record types was measured on a scale represented by four colors – green, light yellow, dark yellow, and red. The data are available in tables by record type and also by state, in the appendices. Green represents a law that allows access to home addresses for the record. Light yellow indicates a state that has a balancing test for release of home addresses in the particular record. Past court cases related to the release of the record are noted in the comments column of the tables in the appendix. Dark yellow indicates a law that limits access based on the individual or person listed in the record. Red indicates home addresses are explicitly exempt from release for the record. (See appendices A and B for color-coded results.) Three states did not have a 2019 Open Government Guide published by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press as of July 1, 2019, when the review was conducted. In each case, requests for additional details were sent to FOI representatives from that respective state. Updated information was added to one of the states through these requests.

Results

Overall, the largest group of records (63) fell under the classification of always exempt, while the smallest group of records (20) fell under the classification of balancing test. See Table 1. The type and frequency of exemptions largely depended on the type of record. For example, home addresses from Personnel records and Firearms records were most often always exempt from disclosure, while for Voter Registration records, the majority of states allow for disclosure of home addresses, or allowed for only some individuals to be exempt from the disclosure.

Table 1 2019 Home Address Exemptions				
Type of exemption	Personnel	Firearms	Voter Registration	Total
Always disclosable	3 (5.9%)	3 (5.9%)	34 (66.6%)	40
Balancing test	14 (27.5%)	6 (11.8%)	0 (0%)	20
Individual exemptions	8 (15.7%)	1 (2%)	12 (23.5%)	21
Always exempt	24 (47.0%)	36 (70.6%)	3 (5.9%)	63
No data available	2 (3.9%)	5 (9.8%)	2 (3.9%)	9
Total	51	51	51	153

Personnel records

In 2019, only three states (Alaska, New Mexico, and Tennessee) listed home addresses as always disclosable, while 24 always exempted the information. Eight states had exemptions for specific individuals, and 14 required some sort of balancing test or agency interpretation before disclosure. Two states did not have data available for 2019. Both states always exempted the information in 2011. See Table 2 on the next page. Several states list specific personnel details that can be publicly disclosed, and most deal with information related to the task of the employee's job. For example, in Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Wyoming, the laws specifically list only job-related information as disclosable. This information includes salary, qualifications for employments, routine work-related directory information, length of service, title, position, and employment dates. Other states, such as Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, and Oklahoma, specifically exempt personal details such as home address, telephone number, and Social Security Number. In Rhode Island, an employee's city or town or residence is public, but not the specific home address.

Table 2 <i>Personnel Record Exemptions</i>		
Type of exemption	2011	2019
Always disclosable	4	3
Balancing test	14	14
Individual exemptions	9	8
Always exempt	24	24
No data available	0	2
Total	51	51

States with individual exemptions most often included public safety officers and court employees as exempt from home address disclosure. In Florida, the list of employee types exempt increased from 2011 and 2019, to include tax collectors, inspectors general, investigators in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, certain Department of Health employees, and U.S. military service members. Connecticut includes in its home address exemptions banking employees and those working for the Department of Children and Families. In Louisiana, any public employee may request his or her home address be kept confidential. In Alaska, personal information is defined in the law, and home addresses are specifically excluded.

Firearms applications and permits

In 2019, only three states (Idaho, Mississippi, and New York) listed firearms applications and permits as always disclosable, while 36 listed the records as always exempt from disclosure. Six states required some sort of interpretation or balancing test, and one – California – had exemptions for specific public safety officers. Some states, including Colorado and Vermont, do not require residents to register firearms or receive permits, so there is no list of addresses to be disclosed or exempt from disclosure. They are among five states without data for 2019. See Table 3, next page.

Table 3		
<i>Firearms Permits and Licenses Exemptions</i>		
Type of exemption	2011	2019
Always disclosable	15	3
Balancing test	7	6
Individual exemptions	1	1
Always exempt	27	36
No data available	1	5
Total	51	51

Most of the changes in law between 2011 and 2019 came in this records category – and most often toward less transparency. Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia all made changes that exempted firearms permits, specifically home addresses, from disclosure, after previously having more open laws. For example, in Virginia, firearms permits were completely open prior to 2008, when the law changed to only allow review at a local courthouse. Then in 2013, the legislature changed the law to prohibit release of permit information at courthouses, essentially closing off the records to the public (Rhyne, M., personal communication, Jan. 18, 2019). In West Virginia, the state legislature amended the open records law in 2015 to specifically exempt firearms application information, but then later removed the requirements to carry a permit, leaving the exemption moot (Reporters Committee, 2019).

Voter registration records

Voter Registration records were the most open of the three categories reviewed, with two thirds of the states requiring disclosure of the records, including home addresses, in 2019. See Table 4. Three states – Kentucky, Michigan, and Vermont – changed their laws between 2011 and 2019 to make the records more accessible to the public. Only Oklahoma made a change toward more privacy, allowing the state election board to keep confidential the home addresses of certain victims and public safety or court employees. Twelve states allow residents to keep their home addresses confidential, particularly if they are victims of domestic violence. In Alaska, any resident can request his or her address be kept confidential on Voter Registration records. In Virginia, anyone using a P.O. Box address on the Voter Registration record can be exempt from home address disclosure (Rhyne, M., personal communication, Jan. 18, 2019).

Table 4 <i>Voter Registration Exemptions</i>		
Type of exemption	2011	2019
Always disclosable	33	34
Balancing test	0	0
Individual exemptions	12	12
Always exempt	6	3
No data available	0	2
Total	51	51

Overall changes

State laws changed in 16 instances during the review time frame. See Table 5 below. In only three instances was that change toward more transparency – all of those being for Voter Registration records. In the other 13 instances, the laws were changed to put more limits on access to the public records. In particular, the majority of those limits were found in firearms permits and applications records.

Table 5 <i>Change in home address exemptions from 2011- 2019</i>		
Record Type	More transparent	Less transparent
Personnel records	0	2
Firearms permits	0	10
Voter registration	3	1
Total	3	13

Discussion

The December 2018 editorial in the *New York Times* was surprising, not because it advocated for more privacy for home addresses – that is a standpoint that has been growing since the 1994 Driver’s Privacy Protection Act. The editorial is interesting in its source – a journalistic outlet that typically fights for open records, indicating a growing shift in how home addresses are perceived as a public record. That most of the records reviewed here are always exempt from disclosure is not surprising in light of the literature, which shows concerns about personal privacy, including home addresses. Likewise, the areas of change found in this review are expected within the context of two national conversations taking place: Allegations of potential voter fraud after national elections, and debates about gun control in the wake of several high-profile shootings.

When claims of voter fraud are alleged, advocates seek to prove the claims through comparisons of voter registration records, including home addresses (Levitt, 2007). After claims of voter fraud in the 2016 presidential election, and 2018 midterm elections (Wines, 2016; Graham, 2016; Farley & Robertson, 2018), then, it stands to reason that this record type is valued as open to provide a measure for checking voter rolls after contentious elections. The law changes to make this record type more open happened before the 2018 midterm elections, but the continued debate around the topic indicates that this record may continue this same trend.

Gun control has been a national debate for years, one that intensified after the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. In some cases, that debate brought to light the public nature of firearms permits. For example, in New York, the *Journal News* published a list of gun permit owners in two New York counties and a map of their home addresses to inform the public about who in their communities owned guns (Maas & Levs, 2012). New York gun owners were outraged. In response, addresses of journalists working for the newspaper were published online, and the staff was harassed and threatened (Haughney, 2013). The following year, the state passed the New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act, which among other features, allowed gun permittees to opt out of disclosure of their home address, which more than 15,000 had done a little over a year later (Worley, 2014). Arguments against disclosure of firearms records include owner concerns about gun theft and personal safety of the permittees. Swanson (2009), on the other hand, argues that firearms permits, and the personally identifying information included in them, should remain public because they reveal important public safety role of government agencies in deciding who should be allowed to own or carry firearms. In general, it seems, the concerns about personal safety of gun owners has had more impact on state laws.

Limitations

As with any study, there are some limitations here. While an effort for external validation was made, and about a third of the FOI experts queried responded, that leaves two thirds of the state evaluations unchecked by an outside source. The feedback from the 17 FOI experts, however, validated the data with only some clarifications. This lends confidence to the rest of the data contained in the appendix. Another limitation is the lack of 2019 data for two states, which makes an overall comparison difficult.

Future research on this topic could add the data from the two missing states if the Reporters Committee updates its Open Government Guide, or by using the most recent FOI laws in those

states. Researchers may also look to expand on the categories of record exemption reviewed to get a bigger picture sense of how states handle other types of information, or compare home address exemptions in other countries' FOI laws.

Recommendations

With growing privacy concerns prompting many to reconsider what personal information should be publicly disclosable, this review of home addresses exemptions can help guide strategic response to proposed changes to state FOI laws. Considering widespread concerns about home address information being made public, including from organizations that typically advocate for government transparency, it makes sense to work toward a middle ground when changes to open records laws are proposed. That middle ground can come from laws that provide flexibility in balancing tests or limited exemptions based on the individuals in question. A balancing test will require an outside agency or judge to weigh in on the release of records, adding an extra step to release. While this may become cumbersome and problematic based on the viewpoint of those in charge of evaluating release, the practice would be better than an all-or-nothing view of records release.

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Appendix A

Home address exemptions, by record type

Always disclosable	
Balancing test	
Individual exemptions	
Always exempt	

Personnel records (* indicates a state where FOI expert verified results)	2011	2019	Comments
Alabama		No data	“Sensitive personnel records” are not open to public disclosure.
Alaska			2011 & 2019: 1990 FOI law amendment defined personal information, and specifically excludes names, addresses, and phone numbers from that definition, unless otherwise exempted in the law.
Arizona			2011 & 2019 - Exemptions for law enforcement and domestic violence victims.
Arkansas			2011 & 2019: As amended in 2001, the FOIA exempts “home addresses of non-elected state employees contained in employer records.”
California			2011 & 2019: California has a catchall exemption that creates a balancing test between the public interest in withholding vs. disclosure. However, disclosure of home addresses was not prohibited under the state’s right of privacy.
Colorado *			2011 & 2019: Personnel files, including home addresses, are specifically exempt from the act.
Connecticut *			Home addresses of various federal, state and local government employees are exempt, depending on the type of employee, including DCF, banking employees, and public safety employees.
Delaware			2011 & 2019 - Attorney General opinion allows home address to be redacted from personnel records before release.
District of Columbia			2011 & 2019: Information “of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy” is exempt from disclosure.
Florida *			2011: Home address exemptions for various officials are outlined by type, including law enforcement personnel, firefighters, judges, attorneys, employees charged with hiring or firing, code enforcement officers, guardians ad litem, probation officers, and their families. 2017 (based on 2017 Government in the Sunshine Manual): County tax collectors, domestic violence victims, hospital employees, impaired practitioner consultants, inspectors general, investigators of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, certain Department of Health employees, and U.S. military service members added to list of exemptions.

Georgia			<p>2011: 50-18-72 (13) Home address exemptions specified for employees of the Department of Revenue, law enforcement officers, firefighters, judges, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, scientists employed by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, correctional employees, prosecutors, teachers, and employees of a public school.</p> <p>2019: 50-18-72 (21) Records concerning public employees that reveal the public employee's home address, except that it does not apply to public records that do not specifically identify the public employee or job.</p>
Hawaii *			<p>2011 & 2019: Government records, which if disclosed, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, are exempt. As part of the "information in an agency's personnel file" is included, but not specified. (Per Civil Beat Law Center for the Public Interest:) While there may technically be a balancing test, home address information has been historically considered private.</p>
Idaho			<p>2011 & 2019: All personnel records of a current or former public official except employment history, salary, and workplace details.</p>
Illinois			<p>Private information is exempt from disclosure, including home addresses.</p>
Indiana *			<p>2011 & 2019: All personnel records of a current or former public official except employment history, salary, and workplace details may be exempted at the discretion of the public agency.</p>
Iowa *			<p>2011 & 2019: All personnel records of a current or former public official are private except for employment history, salary, and workplace details.</p>
Kansas *			<p>2011 & 2019: Personnel files are exempt. Information of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy is exempted. Defined as "revealing information that would be highly offensive to a reasonable person, including information that may pose a risk to a person or property and is not of legitimate concern to the public."</p>
Kentucky *			<p>2011 & 2019: Records act exempts "records containing information of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" which has been used to redact home address information.</p>
Louisiana			<p>2011 & 2019: Home address and telephone number of public employees when the employee requests that they be confidential.</p>
Maine *			<p>2011 & 2019: A public employee's personal contact information, including home address, is confidential.</p>
Maryland			<p>2011 & 2019: Personal identification information, including address, is considered sociological data. If the agency has adopted rules or regulations that define sociological information, then inspection of that information shall be denied. Information that identifies an individual by an "identifying factor," including address, are exempt, except for research purposes. Home address is exempt unless the employee gives permission.</p>
Massachusetts			<p>2011 & 2019: A balancing test to determine if a record invades privacy (disclosing "intimate details" of a "highly personal nature"), or has a "public interest in obtaining information substantially outweighs the seriousness of any invasion of privacy." 1987 court case found name, address and pay were "payroll" records not exempt from personnel records exemption. Public Safety personnel are exempt from address disclosure.</p>

Michigan			2011 & 2019: Specific employees exempt from address disclosure, including active or retired law enforcement officers and their families.
Minnesota			2011 & 2019: All information except salary, benefits, title, job details, and employment dates, is exempt from disclosure.
Mississippi			2011 & 2019: Home address of law enforcement officer, criminal private investigator, judge, district attorney, or spouse/child is exempt from disclosure. Other addresses should be disclosed.
Missouri			2011 & 2019: Home addresses not specifically exempt, but “individually identifiable personal records may be closed.”
Montana *			2011 & 2019: Presumed open as not specifically closed in any way. Only specific personally identifying information to be redacted is SSN and birthdates. However, Supreme Court decision in 1982 exempts personnel records including information “most individuals would not willingly disclose publicly.”
Nebraska			2011 & 2019: Exempts “personal information in records regarding personnel of public bodies other than salaries and routine directory information.”
Nevada			2011 & 2019: Generally redacted pursuant to <i>Donrey v. Bradshaw</i> 1990, which found if a particular record is not specifically declared open, a balancing test must be applied, beginning with the presumption the record is public, then weighing the public’s interest in the document vs. privacy or confidentiality interests asserted by the keeper of the record.
New Hampshire			2011 & 2019: The statute does not refer to personally identifying information in personnel documents, but a catchall exemption requires a balancing test to determine if personnel files would constitute an invasion of privacy. A 1974 case found names and addresses of substitute teachers were specifically public.
New Jersey			2011 & 2019: All information except for name, title, position, salary, length of service, and other job-specific details, is exempt from disclosure.
New Mexico			2011 & 2019: Presumed open because not specifically exempted. Records contained in personnel files will be publicly available to the extent they do not involve “matters of opinion” or fall under another exemption. Personally identifying information is defined as only SSN, license numbers, and birthdate.
New York			2011 & 2019: Often this type of information will be redacted from records under FOIL’s invasion of privacy exemption. Releasing addresses for commercial purposes is considered an invasion of privacy under the definition. Also, information of a personal nature that is not relevant to the ordinary work of the agency.
North Carolina			2011 & 2019: Exempt, except for specific records dealing with name, age, date of employment, contract, position, title, salary, promotions, and other work related details.
North Dakota			2011 & 2019: Personal information in a personnel record is exempt from disclosure. The definition includes home address.
Ohio			2011 & 2019: Court interpretations have held federal right to privacy bars release of some personally identifying information to some kinds of requesters. Home addresses of law enforcement, emergency responders, court employees, and youth services employees - and their families - are exempt, but a journalist may request the information if it is in the public interest.

Oklahoma			2011 & 2019: Home address, telephone number, and SSN of any current or former employee shall be kept confidential.
Oregon*			2011 & 2019: 2011 & 2019: ORS 192.355(3) Exempts public body employee or volunteer residential addresses.
Pennsylvania *			2011: Home addresses of law enforcement officers or judges are specifically exempt. Private employees of organizations contracting with government agency may be redacted. 2019: (Per Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition): Home addresses of law enforcement officers or judges as well as minors under age 17 are specifically exempt. Private employees of organizations contracting with government agency may be redacted. Due to a Supreme Court ruling, home addresses are generally exempt under privacy guarantees in the Constitution, unless a stronger public interest would be served by their release.
Rhode Island			2011 & 2019: Only information related to the employment, including city or town of residence, but not the specific address, can be released.
South Carolina			2011 & 2019: The exemptions for “unreasonable invasion of personal privacy” only specify home address for people with disabilities and for commercial uses, so a determination would need to be made before releasing an employee’s address to the public.
South Dakota			2011 & 2019: Confidential other than salaries and routine directory information.
Tennessee			2011: Generally open, but not Social Security Numbers. 2019: Court interpretations have gone back and forth. 2013 case ruled residential addresses of third party contractors was public. 2017 case ruled all residential addresses were confidential information. Legislature later amended the code to eliminate addresses from category of protected information. TCA 10-7-504(f) - Telephone numbers, residential addresses, Social Security Numbers, bank account numbers, and driver’s license information of public employees or their immediate family members is exempt from disclosure.
Texas			2011 & 2019: Information revealing home addresses, home telephone numbers, and SSN of current or former governmental officials and employees, as well as certain peace and security officers, is protected.
Utah			2011 & 2019: Records concerning a current or former employee of, or applicant for employment with, a government entity “that would disclose the individual’s home address, home telephone number, Social Security number, insurance coverage, marital status, or payroll deductions” are exempt.
Vermont			2011 & 2019: Personal documents are exempt. Defined as information relating to “personal finances, medical, or psychological facts” or that “reveal intimate details of a person’s life, including any information that might subject that person to embarrassment, harassment, disgrace, or loss of employment or friends.”
Virginia *			2011 & 2019: Personnel records containing identifiable individuals are excluded. State statutes define “personal contact information” as including home address or telephone number. The exemption is discretionary, so a government may choose to release a file or some part of a file. (Virginia Coalition for Open Government)

Washington *			2011 & 2019: Residential addresses, telephone numbers, wireless numbers, personal e-mail addresses, SSN, and emergency contact information of employees or volunteers of a public agency are exempt from disclosure.
West Virginia			2011: Facts – such as an individual’s name and residential address – which “are not ‘personal’ or ‘private’ facts but are public in nature in that the constitute information normally shared with strangers and are ascertainable by reference to publicly obtainable books and records” are disclosable without a balancing test. 2019: Under the Public Records Management and Preservation Act, personal information of state officers, employees, and retirees – including home addresses – is confidential.
Wisconsin		No data	2011: Certain employee personnel records, including home address, is exempt.
Wyoming			2011 & 2019: Personnel files are closed, except for qualifications for employment and salary.

Firearms permits (* indicates a state where FOI expert verified results)	2011	2019	Comments
Alabama		No data	2011: Presumably open, as copies of pistol permits are public records.
Alaska			2011 & 2019: The list of concealed handgun permittees, and all applications, are not public records.
Arizona			2011 & 2019: Information and records maintained by the Department of Public Safety on applicants for a concealed weapon permit “shall not be available to any other person or entity except on an order from a state or federal court.”
Arkansas			2011 & 2019: Records are exempt from FOIA, except the name and zip code for licensee may be released upon request by a citizen of Arkansas.
California			2011 & 2019: While firearms licenses are public, the home address of peace officers, judges, court commissioners, and magistrates are exempt from release.
Colorado *	N/A	N/A	2011 & 2019: Colorado does not require firearms to be registered, and prohibits law enforcement from maintaining a list of people who buy or sell or transfer firearms. (per Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition)
Connecticut *			2011 & 2019: Names and addresses of people with permits to carry pistols and revolvers are exempt from FOIA.
Delaware			2011 & 2019: Any records that disclose the identity or address of any person holding a permit to carry a concealed deadly weapon are exempt.
District of Columbia			2011 & 2019: Privacy exemption may apply. 1993 case refused to release names and addresses of gun owners on privacy grounds.
Florida *			2011 & 2019: Personal identifying information of an individual who has applied for or received a license to carry a concealed weapon is confidential and exempt from disclosure.
Georgia			2011 & 2019: The FOI act does not apply to weapons carry licenses.

Hawaii *			2011 & 2019: Firearm permit information that identifies an individual permit by name or address is exempt.
Idaho			2011 & 2019: Presumed open. "Once a permit is issued, it is open to the public."
Illinois			2011 & 2019: Private information is exempt from disclosure, and includes home addresses. Gun permits are also closed.
Indiana *			2011 & 2019: Applications for gun permits and permits are confidential, except for law enforcement personnel seeking to determine the validity of a license to carry a handgun, or to persons conducting journalistic or academic work, but only if all personal identifying information is redacted.
Iowa *			2011: Presumed open. "There is no specific statutory provision covering gun permits and there are no reported cases." 2019: A 2017 law was passed, requiring the commissioner of public safety "shall keep confidential personally identifiable information of holders of professional and nonprofessional permits to carry weapons and permits to acquire pistols or revolvers..."
Kansas *			2011: Presumed open. "No applicable law." 2019: Records related to persons licensed to carry concealed handguns are confidential and may not be disclosed.
Kentucky *			2011: While a list of names of every individual in Kentucky licensed to carry a firearm is open to public to inspect in hard copy, it can contain no other identifying information other than names. 2019: Information concerning individuals licensed in Kentucky to carry a concealed firearm is generally closed from the public.
Louisiana			2011: Presumed open. No specific exemption in the law. 2019: Information in an application for a concealed handgun permit is exempt from disclosure.
Maine *			2011 & 2019: While the applications to carry concealed firearms are confidential, the actual permits are considered public record. However, only the municipality of residence, date of issuance, and expiration date are public.
Maryland			2011: Presumed open. No statutory or case law addressing the issue. 2019: A custodian shall deny inspection of records of a person authorized to sell, purchase, rent, or transfer regulated firearms or to carry, wear, or transport a handgun.
Massachusetts			2011 & 2019: Names and addresses exempt from disclosure on applications, permits and sales or transfers.
Michigan			2011 & 2019: Courts have ruled the names and addresses of persons who owned registered handguns should be exempt under the law's privacy exemption.
Minnesota			2011 & 2019: All data pertaining to the purchase or transfer of firearms and applications for permits to carry firearms, which are collected by state agencies, political subdivisions, or statewide systems, are classified as private.
Mississippi			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed public, as no specific exemption exists. However, permits are closed for 45 days after issuance or denial.
Missouri			2011 & 2019: Records of permits are closed to the public.

Montana *			2011 & 2019: Open unless the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure.
Nebraska			2011 & 2019: Information concerning the applicant or permit holder is not public.
Nevada			2011 & 2019: The Nevada Supreme Court held firearms permits are public, even though applications are not. However, if otherwise confidential information is included in the permit, that can be redacted. Confidential information is defined in state statutes, not cross listed with the act.
New Hampshire			2011 & 2019: Gun permits not specifically addressed, but New Hampshire has a catch-all exemption that could be used to withhold “confidential, commercial or financial information.”
New Jersey			2011: The licenses/permits are public records, but they are not open to inspection. They are exempt from disclosure by attorney general regulations. 2019: More specifically exempt. Government record should not include any personal firearms record, including names, address, SSN, phone number, e-mail, social media address, or driver’s license number.
New Mexico*			2011 & 2019: Permits are exempted from the general right to inspect public records.
New York			2011 & 2019: According to the express terms of N.Y. Penal Law 400.00(5), “the name and address of any person” who has been granted a pistol permit license “shall be a public record.” This was backed up by 1998 case, and affirmed in a 1999 case.
North Carolina*			2011: Address presumed public as “permits for handguns and other weapons issued by sheriffs ... are public records.” 2019: In 2014, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation to make information provided in applying for a concealed handgun permit and the names of people obtaining permits from sheriff’s offices no longer public.
North Dakota			2011 & 2019: Information collected from an applicant for a license to carry a firearm or dangerous weapon concealed is confidential.
Ohio			2011 & 2019: Records related to license to carry concealed handgun are not public records.
Oklahoma			2011: Not mentioned in the report, so presumed open. 2019: The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation maintains a list of all persons issued a handgun license under the Oklahoma Self-Defense Act, but the list is available only to law enforcement agencies.
Oregon			2011: Oregon’s appellate court has held that records of concealed handgun licenses are public records, and that exceptions for personal privacy do not generally apply. 2019: In 2012, the Oregon Legislature passed what is now ORS 192.374, which expressly prohibits disclosure of records or information identifying holders of concealed handgun licenses, except in certain circumstances.
Pennsylvania			2011: While the act does not specifically address gun permits, they are presume public, with certain personal information redacted. Addresses were specifically exempt from disclosure under previous versions of the FOI act. 2019: (Per Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition): All information regarding firearms applications and permits, including addresses, are exempt from public disclosure under PA Title 37 chapter 33 section 33.103.

Rhode Island			2011 & 2019: Gun permit records are public, but all exempt portions must be redacted. What those portions are, is not specified, and would therefore require interpretation.
South Carolina			2011 & 2019: A list of persons with permits to carry concealed weapons may only be released to law enforcement or in response to a court order.
South Dakota			2011 & 2019: State law is designed to prevent release of information concerning those licensed to owning a firearm or carrying a concealed pistol.
Tennessee			2011: There is no restriction on public access to gun permits, although certain information in the application for the permit might be kept confidential by other provisions of the law. 2019: Information in an application for a handgun permit are confidential.
Texas			2011: Addresses presumed open because gun permits are not specifically addressed in the law. 2019: Information on individuals licensed to carry concealed handguns is confidential and not subject to requests under the act.
Utah			2011 & 2019: Names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and SSN are classified as protected records.
Vermont		N/A	2011: Addresses presumed open, as gun permits are not specifically addressed in the law. 2019: Gun permits are not required in Vermont, so no such records exist.
Virginia *			2011: Information from the concealed carry permit database should be limited to law-enforcement personnel for investigative purposes. Always individually disclosable at courthouses. 2019: In 2013, the legislature prohibited release of the permit information at courthouses. (Virginia Coalition for Open Government) The Department of State Police receive all orders issuing concealed handgun permits, but the information is withheld from public disclosure.
Washington *			2011 & 2019: License applications for concealed pistols are exempt from public disclosure.
West Virginia		N/A	2011: Addresses presumed public, as there is no provision in state law exempting information from the licenses. 2019: In 2015, the state legislature amended FOIA to exempt gun license application information. But then in 2016, the legislature removed requirements to have a permit to carry a hidden firearm, so the exemption is moot.
Wisconsin *		No data	2011: Concealed carry license records are not public except in the context of a prosecution.
Wyoming			2011 & 2019: Concealed carry permits are confidential.

Voter registration (* indicates a state where FOI expert verified results)	2011	2019	Comments
Alabama		No data	2011: While the list of names and precincts are open, home address is not.

Alaska			2011 & 2019: Individual voters may request their home address be kept confidential.
Arizona			2011 & 2019: Certain public officials and victims of domestic violence can prevent the public from accessing their residential address, telephone number, and precinct.
Arkansas			2011 & 2019: Voter registration lists are open.
California			2011 & 2019: Personal information, including home address, may be disclosed to “any person for election, scholarly, journalistic or political purposes, or for governmental purposes.”
Colorado *			2011 & 2019: While voter registration records are public, any person may request that the home address be exempt from public disclosure.
Connecticut *			2011: Addresses presumed open because preliminary and final voter registry lists are available for public use.
Delaware			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open because not specified in the law.
District of Columbia			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open because not specified in the law.
Florida *			2011 & 2019: Although citizens may examine the registration books, copying of such books is prohibited.
Georgia			2011 & 2019: Voter registration lists are subject to the act’s disclosure requirements. Place where person registered to vote is exempt, but home address is not exempt.
Hawaii *			2011 & 2019: A voter’s full name, district, and status are open to the public. All other information, including the voter’s address, is confidential except for “election or government purposes.”
Idaho			2011: Upon a showing of good cause, a voter’s physical residence address may be exempt from the voter registration database. 2019: Upon showing of a good cause by the voter to the county clerk in consultation with the county prosecuting attorney, the physical residence address of the voter may be exempt. “Good cause” shall include protection of life and property and protection of victims of domestic violence and similar crimes.
Illinois			2011 & 2019: While voter registration databases are considered open, private information is exempt from disclosure, including home addresses.
Indiana *			2011 & 2019: Presumed open.
Iowa *			2011 & 2019: May only be used for voter registration purposes.
Kansas *			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are public. Voter registration lists is one of the items specifically outlined as available for release even for commercial purposes.
Kentucky *			2011: May be closed to some requesters under Ky. Rev. Stat. 61.878(1)(1), which exempts records made confidential by an enactment of the General Assembly, but available to media using the records for “publication, broadcast or related use.” 2019: Ky. Rev. Stat. 116.095 provides that “[t]he county clerk shall permit any citizen, at all reasonable hours, to inspect or make copies of any [voter] registration record, without a fee. He or she shall, upon request, furnish to any citizen a copy of the registration records, for which he or she may charge necessary duplicating costs not to exceed fifty cents per page.”

Louisiana			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are subject to the Act, except for the “name and address of a law enforcement officer in the custody of the registrar of voters or the secretary of state, if certified by the law enforcement agency employing the officer that the officer is engaging in hazardous activities to the extent that it is necessary for his name and address to be kept confidential.”
Maine *			2011 & 2019: Voter registration information does not include those who enroll in the Address Confidentiality Program.
Maryland			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open because no specific mention in the law.
Massachusetts			2011 & 2019: While the Central Voter Registry is open to the public, the names and addresses listed therein are not public records and are only open to statewide committees.
Michigan <i>Needs clarification</i>			2011: Voter registration records were exempt from disclosure under Mich. Comp. Laws 168.495a(2) 2019: Not addressed in act, but Michigan Election Law 168.509ff seems to say they are public.
Minnesota			2011 & 2019: A public information list of voter registration records may be made available to the public.
Mississippi			2011 & 2019: Addresses public. Voter registration records are open except for SSN, phone numbers, age, and date of birth.
Missouri			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are open, but cannot be used for commercial purposes.
Montana *			2011 & 2019: All records pertaining to voter registration and elections are public.
Nebraska			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are available for inspection, but may not be copied. A list of registered voters minus personal identification information is available for sale by the Secretary of State.
Nevada			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open as there is no specific exemption listed.
New Hampshire			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open as there is no specific exemption listed.
New Jersey			2011 & 2019: Victims of domestic violence or stalking can omit their home addresses from voter registration.
New Mexico			2011 & 2019: Voter registration lists are public. Only SSN, agency where voter registered, birthdates, and telephone numbers are exempt.
New York			2011 & 2019: Presumed open because not specifically exempt. 1984 state Supreme Court case granted access to computer tapes with voter telephone numbers and voter histories.
North Carolina			2011 & 2019: Individual voter registration information is public except for SSN, birthdates, driver’s license numbers, and agency where voter registered.
North Dakota			2011 & 2019: Though North Dakota does not have voter registration, a central voter file and voter list are both public, except for the voter’s birthdate and state identification number. Records for people with restraining or protective orders are protected and not disclosable.

Ohio			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records, including home addresses, are public.
Oklahoma			2011: Voter registration records may be obtained for a fee. 2019: Voter registration records may be obtained for a fee. The state election board may promulgate rules to keep confidential the residence and mailing address of voters who are members of certain classes, including judges, district attorneys, and persons protected by victim's protective orders.
Oregon			2011: The residence address of an elector where a showing of a reasonable threat to personal safety is present is exempt from release. Also exempt: public safety officers.
Pennsylvania *			2011: Records of the voter registration commission are open to public inspection and copying. 2019: (Per Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition): Records of the voter registration commission are open to public inspection and copying, including addresses. Social Security numbers are exempt from disclosure. One must sign an affidavit that voter registration information will only be used for political or other related purposes.
Rhode Island			2011: Voter registration records are public, but nothing contained in them shall indicate the particular place at which the voter was registered. 2019: Presumably open. No specific exemption.
South Carolina			2011 & 2019: Official registration records are public records subject to inspection of any citizen at all times.
South Dakota			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are open.
Tennessee			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are open.
Texas			2011 & 2019: Applications to register to vote on file with a county registrar are public.
Utah			2011: Voter registration records, including a person's voting history, are public except for those parts "identifying a voter's driver license or ID card number." 2019: Adds e-mail address and date of birth to exempt details.
Vermont			2011: Records of a registered voter's birthdate, driver's license number, SSN, and street address are exempt. 2019: Telephone number and e-mail address now listed, but home address no longer on the list.
Virginia *			2011 & 2019: Voter registration documents are covered by state Election Code, which says they are open to inspection by the public. If voter has provided a P.O. box address instead of home address, there is a prohibition against releasing home address from record. (per Virginia Coalition for Open Government)
Washington *			2011 & 2019: The voter registration list, including addresses, is available for download from the Secretary of State website, but cannot be used for commercial purposes. The state has a voter address confidentiality program for some crime victims. (per Washington Coalition for Open Government)
West Virginia			2011 & 2019: While there are no cases construing FOIA in the context of voter registration records, such records have been routinely made available to the public upon request.

Wisconsin *		No data	2011: Addresses presumed open as election records are open to public inspection.
Wyoming			2011 & 2019: While some personally identifying information is confidential, names, gender, and addresses are not exempt.

Appendix B

Home address exemptions, by state

(* indicates a state where FOI expert verified results)

Always disclosable	
Balancing test	
Individual exemptions	
Always exempt	

Alabama	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files		No data	“Sensitive personnel records” are not open to public disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits		No data	2011: Presumably open, as copies of pistol permits are public records.
Voter registration documents		No data	2011: While the list of names and precincts are open, home address is not.

Alaska	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: 1990 FOI law amendment defined personal information, and specifically excludes names, addresses, and phone numbers from that definition, unless otherwise exempted in the law.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: The list of concealed handgun permittees, and all applications, are not public records.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Individual voters may request their residential address be kept confidential.

Arizona	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019 - Individual exemptions for law enforcement/public safety and domestic violence victims.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Information and records maintained by the Department of Public Safety on applicants for a concealed weapon permit “shall not be available to any other person or entity except on an order from a state or federal court.”
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Certain public officials and victims of domestic violence can prevent the general public from accessing their residential address, telephone number, and voting precinct.

Arkansas	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: As amended in 2001, the FOIA exempts “home addresses of non-elected state employees contained in employer records.”
Firearms applications and permits			2019: Records are exempt from FOIA, except the name and zip code for licensee may be released upon request by a citizen of Arkansas.
Voter registration documents			2019: Voter registration lists are open.

California	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: California has a catchall exemption that creates a balancing test between the public interest in withholding vs. disclosure. However, disclosure of home addresses was not prohibited under the state’s right of privacy.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: While firearms licenses are public, the home address of peace officers, judges, court commissioners, and magistrates are exempt from release.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Personal information, including home address, may be disclosed to “any person for election, scholarly, journalistic, or political purposes, or for governmental purposes.”

Colorado *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Personnel files, including home addresses, are specifically exempt from the act.
Firearms applications and permits	N/A	N/A	2011 & 2019: Colorado does not require firearms to be registered, and prohibits law enforcement from maintaining a list of people who buy, sell, or transfer firearms. (per Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition)
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: While voter registration records are public, any person may request that the home address be exempt from public disclosure.

Connecticut*	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			Home addresses of various federal, state, and local government employees are exempt, depending on the type of employee, including DCF, banking employees, and public safety employees.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Names and addresses of people with permits to carry pistols and revolvers are exempt from FOIA.
Voter registration documents			2011: Addresses presumed open because preliminary and final voter registry lists are available for public use.

Delaware	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019 - Attorney General opinion allows home address to be redacted from personnel records before release.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Any records which disclose the identity or address of any person holding a permit to carry a concealed deadly weapon are exempt.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open because not specified in the law.

District of Columbia	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			Information “of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy” is exempt from disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Privacy exemption may apply. 1993 case refused to release names and addresses of gun owners on privacy grounds.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open because not specified in the law.

Florida *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011: Home address exemptions for various officials are outlined by type, including law enforcement personnel, firefighters, judges, attorneys, employees charged with hiring or firing, code enforcement officers, guardians ad litem, probation officers, and their families. 2017 (based on 2017 Government in the Sunshine Manual): County tax collectors, domestic violence victims, hospital employees, impaired practitioner consultants, inspectors general, investigators of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, certain Department of Health employees, and U.S. military service members added to list of exemptions.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Personal identifying information of an individual who has applied for or received a license to carry a concealed weapon is confidential and exempt from disclosure.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Although citizens may examine the registration books, copying of such books is prohibited.

Georgia	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011: 50-18-72 (13) Home address exemptions specified for employees of the Department of Revenue, law enforcement officers, firefighters, judges, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, scientists employed by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, correctional employees, prosecutors, teachers, and employees of a public school. 2019: 50-18-72 (21) Records concerning public employees that reveal the public employee's home address... except that it does not apply to public records that do not specifically identify the public employee or job.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: The FOI act does not apply to weapons carry licenses.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration lists are subject to the act's disclosure requirements. Place where person registered to vote is exempt, but home address is not specifically exempt.

Hawaii *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Government records, which if disclosed, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, are exempt. "Information in an agency's personnel file" is included in the list of information where a person may have a significant privacy interest, but home address is not specified. (Per Civil Beat Law Center for the Public Interest:) While there may technically be a balancing test, home address information has been historically considered private.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Firearm permit information that identifies an individual permit by name or address is exempt.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: A voter's full name, district, and status are open to the public. All other information, including the voter's address, is confidential except for "election or government purposes."

Idaho	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: All personnel records of a current or former public official except employment history, salary, and workplace details.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Presumed open. "Once a permit is issued, it is open to the public."
Voter registration documents			2011: Upon a showing of good cause, a voter's physical residence address may be exempt from the voter registration database. 2019: Upon showing of a good cause by the voter to the county clerk in consultation with the county prosecuting attorney, the physical residence address of the voter may be exempt. "Good cause" shall include protection of life and property and protection of victims of domestic violence and similar crimes.

Illinois	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			Private information is exempt from disclosure, and includes home addresses.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Private information is exempt from disclosure, and includes home addresses. Gun permits are also closed.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: While voter registration databases are considered open, private information is exempt from disclosure, and includes home addresses.

Indiana *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: All personnel records of a current or former public official except employment history, salary, and workplace details may be exempted at the discretion of the public agency.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Applications for gun permits and permits are confidential, except for law enforcement personnel seeking to determine the validity of a license to carry a handgun, or to persons conducting journalistic or academic work, but only if all personal identifying information is redacted.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Presumed open.

Iowa *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: All personnel records of a current or former public official are private except for employment history, salary, and workplace details.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Presumed open. "There is no specific statutory provision covering gun permits and there are no reported cases." 2019: A 2017 law was passed, requiring the commissioner of public safety "shall keep confidential personally identifiable information of holders of professional and nonprofessional permits to carry weapons and permits to acquire pistols or revolvers..."
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: May only be used for voter registration purposes.

Kansas *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Personnel files are exempt. Information of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy is exempted. Defined as “revealing information that would be highly offensive to a reasonable person, including information that may pose a risk to a person or property and is not of legitimate concern to the public.”
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Presumed open. “No applicable law.” 2019: Records related to persons licensed to carry concealed handguns are confidential and may not be disclosed.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are public records. Voter registration lists is one of the items specifically outlined as available for release even for commercial purposes.

Kentucky *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Records act exempts “records containing information of a personal nature where the public disclosure thereof would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy” which has been used to redact home address information.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: While a list of names of every individual in Kentucky licensed to carry a firearm is open to public to inspect in hard copy, it can contain no other identifying information other than names. 2019: Information concerning individuals licensed in Kentucky to carry a concealed firearm is generally closed from the public.
Voter registration documents			2011: May be closed to some requesters under Ky. Rev. Stat. 61.878(1)(1), which exempts records made confidential by an enactment of the General Assembly, but appear to be available to media using the records as part of a “publication, broadcast or related use.” 2019: Ky. Rev. Stat. 116.095 provides that “[t]he county clerk shall permit any citizen, at all reasonable hours, to inspect or make copies of any [voter] registration record, without a fee. He or she shall, upon request, furnish to any citizen a copy of the registration records, for which he or she may charge necessary duplicating costs not to exceed fifty cents per page.”

Louisiana	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Home address and telephone number of public employees are exempt when the employee requests that they be confidential.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Presumed open. No specific exemption in the law. 2019: Information in an application for a concealed handgun permit is exempt from disclosure.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are subject to the Act, except for the “name and address of a law enforcement officer in the custody of the registrar of voters or the secretary of state, if certified by the law enforcement agency employing the officer that the officer is engaging in hazardous activities to the extent that it is necessary for his name and address to be kept confidential.”

Maine *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: A public employee's personal contact information, including home address, is confidential.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: While the applications to carry concealed firearms are confidential, the actual permits are considered public record. However, only the municipality of residence, date of issuance, and expiration date are public.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration information does not include those who enroll in the Address Confidentiality Program.

Maryland	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Personal identification information, including address, is considered sociological data. If the agency has adopted rules or regulations that define sociological information, then inspection of that information shall be denied. Information that identifies an individual by an "identifying factor," including address, are exempt, except for research purposes. Home address is exempt, unless the employee gives permission for the inspection.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Presumed open. No statutory or case law addressing the issue. 2019: A custodian shall deny inspection of records of a person authorized to sell, purchase, rent, or transfer regulated firearms or to carry, wear, or transport a handgun.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open because no specific mention in the law.

Massachusetts	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: A balancing test to determine if a record invades privacy (disclosing "intimate details" of a "highly personal nature"), or has a "public interest in obtaining information substantially outweighs the seriousness of any invasion of privacy." 1987 court case found name, address, and pay were "payroll" records not exempt from personnel records exemption. Public safety personnel are exempt from address disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Names and addresses exempt from disclosure on applications, permits, sales, or transfers.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: While the Central Voter Registry is open to the public, the names and addresses listed therein are not public records and are only open to statewide committees.

Michigan	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Specific employees exempt from address disclosure, including active or retired law enforcement officers and their families.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Courts have ruled the names and addresses of persons who owned registered handguns should be exempt under the law's privacy exemption.
Voter registration documents			2011: Voter registration records were exempt from disclosure under Mich. Comp. Laws 168.495a(2) 2019: Not addressed in act, but Michigan Election Law 168.509ff seems to say they are public.

Minnesota	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: All information except salary, benefits, title, job details, and employment dates, is exempt from disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: All data pertaining to the purchase or transfer of firearms and applications for permits to carry firearms are classified as private.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: A public information list of voter registration records may be made available to the public.

Mississippi	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Home address of law enforcement officer, criminal private investigator, judge, district attorney, or spouse/child is exempt from disclosure. Other addresses should be disclosed.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed public, as no specific exemption exists. However, permits are closed for 45 days after issuance or denial.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Addresses public. Voter registration records are open except for SSN, phone numbers, age, and date of birth.

Missouri	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Home addresses not specifically exempt, but "individually identifiable personal records may be closed."
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Records of permits are closed to the public.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are open, but cannot be used for commercial purposes.

Montana *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Presumed open as not specifically closed in any way. Only specific personally identifying information to be redacted is SSN and birthdates. However, Supreme Court decision in 1982 exempts personnel records including information "most individuals would not willingly disclose publicly."
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Open unless the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: All records pertaining to voter registration and elections are public.

Nebraska	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Exempts "personal information in records regarding personnel of public bodies other than salaries and routine directory information."
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Information concerning the applicant or permitholder is not a public record.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are available for inspection, but may not be copied. A list of registered voters minus personal identification information is available for sale by the Secretary of State.

Nevada	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Generally redacted pursuant to <i>Donrey v. Bradshaw</i> 1990, which found if a particular record is not specifically declared open, a balancing test must be applied, beginning with the presumption the record is public, then weighing the public's interest in the document vs. privacy or confidentiality interests asserted by the keeper of the record.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: The Nevada Supreme Court held firearms permits are public, even though applications are not. However, if otherwise confidential information is included in the permit, that can be redacted. Confidential information is defined in state statutes, not cross listed with the act.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open as there is no specific exemption listed.

New Hampshire	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: The statute does not refer to personally identifying information in personnel documents, but a catchall exemption requires a balancing test to determine if personnel files would constitute an invasion of privacy. A 1974 case found names and addresses of substitute teachers was specifically public.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Gun permits not specifically addressed, but New Hampshire has a catch-all exemption that could be used to withhold "confidential, commercial or financial information."
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Addresses presumed open as there is no specific exemption listed.

New Jersey	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: All information except for name, title, position, salary, length of service, and other job-specific details, is exempt from disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: The licenses/permits are public records, but they are not open to inspection. They are exempt from disclosure by attorney general regulations. 2019: More specifically exempt. Government record should not include any personal firearms record, including names, address, SSN, phone number, e-mail, social media address, or driver's license number.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Victims of domestic violence or stalking can omit their home addresses from voter registration.

New Mexico*	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Presumed open because not specifically exempted. Records contained in personnel files will be publicly available to the extent they do not involve "matters of opinion" or fall under another exemption. Personally identifying information is defined as only SSN, license numbers, and birthdate.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Permits are exempted from the general right to inspect public records.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration lists are public. Only SSN, agency where voter registered, birthdates, and telephone numbers are exempt.

New York	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Often this type of information will be redacted from records under FOIL's invasion of privacy exemption. Releasing addresses for commercial purposes is considered an invasion of privacy under the definition. Also, information of a personal nature that is not relevant to the ordinary work of the agency.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: According to the express terms of N.Y. Penal Law 400.00(5), "the name and address of any person" who has been granted a pistol permit license "shall be a public record." This was backed up by 1998 case, and affirmed in a 1999 case.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Presumed open because not specifically exempt. 1984 state Supreme Court case granted access to computer tapes with voter telephone numbers and voter histories.

North Carolina*	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Exempt, except for specific records dealing with name, age, date of employment, contract, position, title, salary, promotions, and other work-related details.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Address presumed public as "permits for handguns and other weapons issued by sheriffs ... are public records." 2019: In 2014, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation to make information provided in applying for a concealed handgun permit and the names of people obtaining permits from sheriff's offices no longer public.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Individual voter registration information is public except for SSN, birthdates, driver's license numbers, and agency where voter registered.

North Dakota	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files		No data	2011: Personal information in a personnel record is exempt from disclosure. The definition includes home address.
Firearms applications and permits		No data	2011: Information collected from an applicant for a license to carry a firearm or dangerous weapon concealed is confidential.
Voter registration documents		No data	2011: Though North Dakota does not have voter registration, a central voter file and voter list are both public, except for the voter's birthdate and state identification number.

Ohio	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Court interpretations have held federal right to privacy bars release of some personally identifying information to some kinds of requesters. Home addresses of law enforcement, emergency responders, court employees, and youth services employees – and their families – are exempt, but a journalist may request the information if it is in the public interest.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Records related to license to carry concealed handgun are not public records.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records, including home addresses, are public.

Oklahoma	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Home address, telephone number, and SSN of any current or former employee shall be kept confidential.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Not mentioned in the report, so presumed open. 2019: The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation maintains a list of all persons issued a handgun license under the Oklahoma Self-Defense Act, but the list is available only to law enforcement agencies.
Voter registration documents			2011: Voter registration records may be obtained for a fee. 2019: Voter registration records may be obtained for a fee. The state election board may promulgate rules to keep confidential the residence and mailing address of voters who are members of certain classes, including judges, district attorneys, and persons protected by victim's protective orders.

Oregon*	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: ORS 192.355(3) Exempts public body employee or volunteer residential addresses.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Oregon's appellate court has held that records of concealed handgun licenses are public records, and that exceptions for personal privacy do not generally apply. 2019: In 2012, the Oregon Legislature passed what is now ORS 192.374, which expressly prohibits disclosure of records or information identifying holders of concealed handgun licenses, except in certain circumstances.
Voter registration documents			2011: The residence address of an elector where a showing of a reasonable threat to personal safety is present is exempt from release. Also exempt: public safety officers

Pennsylvania *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011: Home addresses of law enforcement officers or judges are specifically exempt. Private employees of organization contracting with government agency may be redacted. 2019: (Per Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition): Home addresses of law enforcement officers or judges, as well as minors under age 17, are specifically exempt. Private employees of organizations contracting with government agency may be redacted. Due to a Supreme Court ruling, home addresses are generally exempt under privacy guarantees in the Constitution, unless a stronger public interest would be served by their release.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: While the act does not specifically address gun permits, they are presumed public, with certain personal information redacted. Addresses were exempt from disclosure under previous versions of the FOI act. 2019: (Per Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition): All information regarding firearms applications and permits, including addresses, are exempt from public disclosure under PA Title 37 chapter 33 section 33.103.
Voter registration documents			2011: Records of the voter registration commission are open to public inspection and copying. 2019: (Per Pennsylvania Freedom of Information Coalition): Records of the voter registration commission are open to public inspection and copying, including addresses. Social Security numbers are exempt from disclosure. One must sign an affidavit that voter registration information will only be used for political or other related purposes.

Rhode Island	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Only information related to the employment, including city or town of residence, but not the specific address, can be released.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Gun permit records are public, but all exempt portions must be redacted. What those portions are, is not specified, and would therefore require interpretation.
Voter registration documents			2011: Voter registration records are public, but nothing contained in them shall indicate the particular place at which the voter was registered. 2019: Presumably open. No specific exemption.

South Carolina	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: The exemptions for “unreasonable invasion of personal privacy” only specify home address for people with disabilities and for commercial uses, so a determination would need to be made before releasing an employee’s address to the public.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: A list of persons with permits to carry concealed weapons may only be released to law enforcement or in response to a court order.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Official registration records are public records subject to inspection of any citizen at all times.

South Dakota	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Confidential other than salaries and routine directory information.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: State law is designed to prevent release of information concerning those licensed to owning a firearm or carrying a concealed pistol.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are open.

Tennessee	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011: Generally open, but not Social Security Numbers. 2019: Court interpretations have gone back and forth. 2013 case ruled residential addresses of third-party contractors was public. 2017 case ruled all residential addresses were confidential information. Legislature later amended the code to eliminate addresses from category of protected information. TCA 10-7-504(f) - Telephone numbers, residential addresses, Social Security Numbers, bank account numbers, and driver's license information of public employees or their immediate family members is exempt from disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: There is no restriction on public access to gun permits, although certain information in the application for the permit might be kept confidential by other provisions of the law. 2019: Information in an application for a handgun permit are confidential.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration records are open.

Texas	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Information revealing home addresses, home telephone numbers, and SSN of current or former governmental officials and employees, as well as certain peace and security officers, is protected.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Addresses presumed open because gun permits are not specifically addressed in the law. 2019: Information on individuals licensed to carry concealed handguns is confidential and not subject to requests under the act.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Applications to register to vote on file with a county registrar are public information.

Utah	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Records concerning a current or former employee of, or applicant for employment with, a government entity "that would disclose the individual's home address, home telephone number, Social Security number, insurance coverage, marital status, or payroll deductions" are exempt.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates of birth, and SSN are classified as protected records.
Voter registration documents			2011: Voter registration records, including a person's voting history, are public except for those parts "identifying a voter's driver license or ID card number." 2019: adds e-mail address and date of birth to exempt details.

Vermont	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Personal documents are exempt. Defined as information relating to "personal finances, medical or psychological facts" or that "reveal intimate details of a person's life, including any information that might subject that person to embarrassment, harassment, disgrace, or loss of employment or friends."
Firearms applications and permits		N/A	2011: Addresses presumed open, as gun permits are not specifically addressed in the law. 2019: Gun permits are not required in Vermont, so no such records exist.
Voter registration documents			2011: Records of a registered voter's birthdate, driver's license number, SSN, and street address are exempt. 2019: Telephone number and e-mail address now listed, but home address no longer on the list.

Virginia *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Personnel records containing identifiable individuals are excluded. State statutes define "personal contact information" as including home address or telephone number. The exemption is discretionary, so a government may choose to release a file or some part of a file.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Information from the concealed carry permit database should be limited to law-enforcement personnel for investigative purposes. Always individually disclosable at courthouses. 2019: In 2013, the legislature prohibited release of the permit information at courthouses. (Virginia Coalition for Open Government) The Department of State Police receive all orders issuing concealed handgun permits, but the information is withheld from public disclosure.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: Voter registration documents are covered by state Election Code, which says they are open to inspection by the public. If voter has provided a P.O. box address instead of home address, there is a prohibition against releasing home address from record. (per Virginia Coalition for Open Government).

Washington *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Residential addresses, telephone numbers, wireless numbers, personal e-mail addresses, SSN, and emergency contact information of employees or volunteers of a public agency are exempt from disclosure.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: License applications for concealed pistols are exempt from public disclosure.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: The voter registration list, including addresses, is available for download from the Secretary of State website, but cannot be used for commercial purposes. The state has a voter address confidentiality program for some crime victims. (Per Washington Coalition for Open Government)

West Virginia	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011: Facts – such as an individual’s name and residential address – which “are not ‘personal’ or ‘private’ facts but are public in nature in that they constitute information normally shared with strangers and are ascertainable by reference to publicly obtainable books and records” are disclosable without a balancing test. 2019: Under the Public Records Management and Preservation Act, personal information of state officers, employees, and retirees – including home addresses – is confidential.
Firearms applications and permits			2011: Addresses presumed public, as there is no provision in state law exempting information from the licenses. 2019: In 2015, the state legislature amended FOIA to exempt gun license application information. But then in 2016, the legislature removed requirements to have a permit to carry a hidden firearm, so the exemption is moot.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: While there are no cases construing FOIA in the context of voter registration records, such records have been routinely made available to the public upon request.

Wisconsin *	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files		No data	2011: Certain employee personnel records, including home address, is exempt.
Firearms applications and permits		No data	2011: Concealed carry license records are not public except in the context of a prosecution.
Voter registration documents		No data	2011: Addresses presumed open as election records are open to public inspection.

Wyoming	2011	2019	Comments
Personnel files			2011 & 2019: Personnel files are closed, except for qualifications for employment and salary.
Firearms applications and permits			2011 & 2019: Concealed carry permits are confidential.
Voter registration documents			2011 & 2019: While some personally identifying information is confidential, names, gender, and addresses are not exempt.