



**GEORGIA FIRST
AMENDMENT
FOUNDATION**
your right to know

May 20, 2008

Sheriff Ted Paxton
Forsyth County Sheriff's Office
202 Veterans Memorial Blvd
Cumming, GA 30040
VIA FACSIMILE (770) 781-3049

Dear Sheriff Paxton:

I am writing on behalf of the Georgia First Amendment Foundation. We are an organization that seeks to advance the cause of open government and monitors freedom of information issues throughout this state.

It has been brought to our attention that the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office is redacting the year of birth for individuals listed in public records. Additionally, we have learned that the Sheriff's Office requires written open records requests. We are concerned that these activities are contrary to public policy and violate O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72(a)(11.3) (only "day and month of birth" may be redacted); *Howard v. Sumter Free Press, Inc.*, 272 Ga. 521 (2000) (no requirement for written open records requests).

Georgia Law Enforcement and the Open Records Act, a copy of which is enclosed for your review, reviews the disclosure requirements of Georgia's open records act. This manual was prepared by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Georgia Department of Law, the Georgia Department of Public Safety, the Georgia First Amendment Foundation, the Georgia Press Association, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, the Georgia Sheriff's Association, and the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia.

We would appreciate an explanation as to why the Sheriff's Office's practices appear to contravene the public interest. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Hollie Manheimer
Executive Director

Enclosures
Cc: GFAF Board

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"Because public men and women are amenable 'at all times' to the people, they must conduct the public's business out in the open."
The late Charles L. Weltner Sr., Chief Justice, Georgia Supreme Court

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