

IMPACT OF PRIVACY EXEMPTIONS IN OPEN RECORDS LAWS ON COMPUTER-ASSISTED
REPORTING

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ABSTRACT

As more and more personal data are collected and digitized by the government, the more restrictions there are on what reporters can access through open records laws. Every year sees new bills introduced restricting the public's access to data with personally identifying information – the kind of data that can make or break a story or investigative project.

Journalists across the country struggle with access to personally identifying information, and some of them have found successful ways to get around restrictions to access. Almost 50 reporters were told about an experience negotiating for data with personally identifying information, and their experiences are summarized in this article. The lessons they can offer will serve to guide other reporters as they negotiate for data.