

State Supreme Court: Agencies must explain records redaction

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POSTED ON DECEMBER 11, 2014

Kitsap Sun

The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington’s Supreme Court says agencies must give a brief explanation when they decide to withhold or redact records requested under the Public Records Act.

The 5-4 opinion came Thursday in a case involving the city of Lakewood. A man named David Koenig had sought records relating to instances where police officers had been arrested.

In its response, the city redacted the driver’s license numbers of the officers, but failed to explain why it believed that information was exempt from disclosure. Instead, the city wrote to Koenig that the reasons should be “self-evident.”

Writing for the majority, Justice Steven Gonzalez said the question before the court is not whether the driver’s license numbers were appropriately redacted, but whether Lakewood had a duty to explain the redaction. He said it did.