Policy for Online Redaction and Removal Requests

The Pennsylvania State Archives collects, preserves and provides access to many records, including governmental and non-governmental records. Materials are from diverse origins and time periods, and many are available online. It is the mission of the State Archives to make the records in its custody as publicly accessible as possible. If there is any provision of state law that exempts from public disclosure an item in the custody of the State Archives, that provision shall not apply after the item becomes at least 75 years old. The exception is any state law limiting disclosure of vital statistics or sealed records.

Scope

This policy applies to digital materials that are available on Pennsylvania State Archives websites and on third-party platforms and repositories used by the State Archives to make materials accessible to the public. This policy applies only to materials available online available to the public and not physical copies (paper or microfilm), which cannot be changed. This policy does not apply to documents not owned or controlled by the Pennsylvania State Archives, subscription databases, materials already restricted under law, or materials governed by separate agency-specific policies.

Requests for Redaction or Removal

Materials made available online may be redacted or removed only under specific circumstances as outlined in this policy. Individuals can submit requests for materials to be redacted or removed in cases where online access to materials:

- Includes high risk or sensitive personal information (i.e. Social Security Numbers, personal health information, home addresses, or personal financial account details)
- Poses a credible threat to personal or public safety
- Presents intellectual property concerns, such as documented copyright infringement

How to Make a Request

Send your request to RA-StateArchives@pa.gov and include the following information:

- Your full name and contact information
- Whether this request is for yourself or on behalf of another individual (e.g., a guardian on behalf of a minor)

- Identifying information about the material for which you are submitting a redaction or removal request, including but not limited to the URL to the material and the title of the material

Category for your request:

- High risk or sensitive personal information
- Threat to personal or public safety
- Intellectual property

Requests for redaction or removal of multiple materials can be submitted in one communication.

Review Process

The Pennsylvania State Archives will acknowledge receipt of your request within five business days. Your request will be assessed, and the appropriate action will be taken and that decision communicated to you. In some cases, the material may be temporarily removed from public view while your request is evaluated. You may be asked to provide additional supporting documentation for your request.

Potential outcomes of this process may include but are not limited to: the unchanged material remains publicly accessible online; a redacted version of the material is made publicly accessible online; or the material is removed from online access.

Final authority with respect to these decisions resides with the State Archivist.