



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

April 23, 2003

Ms. Rebecca L. Payne
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Human Services
P.O. Box 149030
Austin, Texas 78714-9030

OR2003-2714

Dear Ms. Payne:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 179876.

The Texas Department of Human Services (the "department") received a request for "the proposals and contracts executed between Accenture, SAIC, and IBM with the [department] under the IT Services RFO for Mainframe, Analysis, Web and Mid-Tier Legacy categories." You inform us that the department has released the proposals and contracts of Accenture and SAIC and some of the information that relates to IBM. The department takes no position as to whether the remaining information, all of which relates to IBM, is excepted from disclosure. You believe, however, that this request for information may implicate the proprietary interests of IBM. You notified IBM of this request and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure under Gov't Code chapter 552 in certain circumstances). You also submitted the information that relates to IBM. We have reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.305 allows an interested third party ten business days from the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this decision, this office has received no correspondence from IBM. Thus, IBM has not demonstrated that the submitted documents contain any proprietary information for purposes of section 552.110 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.110(a)-(b); Open Records Decision Nos. 552 at 5 (1990), 661 at 5-6 (1999).

We note, however, that the submitted documents contain e-mail addresses that are confidential under section 552.137 of the Government Code. This exception provides as follows:

- (a) An e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body is confidential and not subject to disclosure under this chapter.
- (b) Confidential information described by this section that relates to a member of the public may be disclosed if the member of the public affirmatively consents to its release.

Gov't Code § 552.137. We have marked the e-mail addresses that are confidential under section 552.137. You do not inform us that the individuals to whom these e-mail addresses pertain have affirmatively consented to their public disclosure. Therefore, the department must withhold the marked e-mail addresses under section 552.137 of the Government Code. The rest of the submitted information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

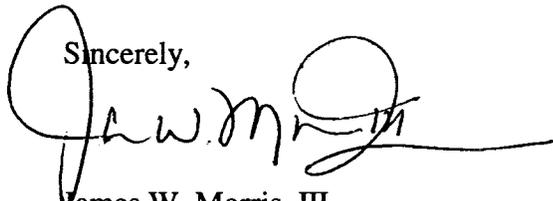
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/sdk

Ref: ID# 179876

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Kindra Norton
Deloitte Consulting
400 West 15th Street, Suite 1700
Austin, Texas 78701-1648
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Andy Slack
IBM, Inc.
400 West 15th Street, Suite 1200
Austin, Texas 78701
(w/o enclosures)