



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 6, 2012

Mr. R. Brooks Moore  
Managing Counsel, Governance  
The Texas A&M University System  
301 Tarrow Street, Sixth Floor  
College Station, Texas 77840-7896

OR2012-12263

Dear Mr. Moore:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 461151 (CC-12-039).

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (the "university") received a request for a copy of any contract between the university and Industrial Economics, Inc. ("IE"). Although you take no position on the public availability of the requested information, you state the requested information may implicate the proprietary interests of IE. Accordingly, you inform us, and provide documentation showing, you notified IE of the request and of the company's right to submit comments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released to the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining that statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure under the Act in certain circumstances). We have reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note, and the university acknowledges, that it did not comply with its deadlines under section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a)-(b). Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, the information at issue is therefore presumed to be subject to required public disclosure and must be released, unless there is a compelling reason to withhold any of the information. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). This statutory

presumption can generally be overcome when information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982). Because the claims of a third party under section 552.110 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason for non-disclosure, we will consider whether the university must withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.110 of the Government Code.

We note an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from IE on why the company's submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude IE has protected proprietary interests in the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110; Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the university may not withhold any portion of the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest IE may have in it. Thus, the university must release the submitted information.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Cynthia G. Tynan  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CGT/ag

Ref: ID# 461151

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Michael Ware  
Industrial Economics, Inc  
2067 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140  
(w/o enclosures)