



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 13, 2014

Mr. Stan Strickland
Senior Associate Commissioner
Legal Section - General Counsel Division
Texas Department of Insurance
P.O. Box 149104, Mail Code 110-1A
Austin, Texas 78714-9104

OR2014-02777

Dear Mr. Strickland:

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# 514271 (TDI No. 145501).

The Texas Department of Insurance (the "department") received a request for the number of a specified category of comprehensive health insurance policies, as well as the number of individuals covered by such policies as of the policy termination dates. You state you have released some of the information. Although you take no position with respect to the public availability of the submitted information, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of certain third parties, namely: Coventry Health and Life Insurance Company, John Alden Life Insurance Company, Time Insurance Company, Union Security Insurance Company, UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company, and UnitedHealthcare of Texas, Incorporated. Accordingly, you state and provide documentation showing, you have notified these third parties of the request for information and of their rights to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305 (permitting interested third party to submit to attorney general reasons why requested information should not be released); *See also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permitted governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure under the circumstances). We have reviewed the submitted information.

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 any of the third parties explaining why their submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude any of the third parties has a protected proprietary

interest 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 department may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest any of these companies may have in the information.

We note, however, the submitted information includes personal e-mail addresses subject to section 552.137 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.137 excepts from disclosure “an e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body,” unless the member of the public consents to its release or the e-mail address is of a type specifically excluded by subsection (c). *See* Gov’t Code § 552.137(a)-(c). The e-mail addresses at issue are not of a type specifically excluded by section 552.137(c). Accordingly, the department must withhold the e-mail addresses we have marked under section 552.137 of the Government Code, unless the owners of the e-mail addresses affirmatively consent to their disclosure. As no exception to disclosure has been raised for the remaining information, the department must release it.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

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¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

Ref: ID# 514271

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Michael Bahr
President
Coventry Health & Life Insurance
Company
3900 Rogers Road
San Antonio, Texas 78251-3635
(w/o enclosures)

National Registered Agents, Inc.
For Coventry Health & Life Insurance
Company
Suite 1150
1021 Main Street
Houston, Texas 77002-6508
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Adam Lamnin
President
John Alden Life Insurance Company
P.O. Box 3050
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201-3050
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Adam Lamnin
President
Time Insurance Company
P.O. Box 3050
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201-3050
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. John Roberts
President
Union Security Insurance Company
P.O. Box 419052
Kansas City, Missouri 64141-6052
(w/o enclosures)

Corporation Service Company
For John Alden Life, Time and Union
Security Insurance Companies
211 East 7th Street, Suite 620
Austin, Texas 78701-3218
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Allen Sorbo
President
UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company
185 Asylum Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Thomas Quirk
President
UnitedHealthcare of Texas, Inc.
5800 Granite Parkway, Suite 900
Plano, Texas 75024-6619
(w/o enclosures)

CT Corporation System
For UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company
and UnitedHealthcare of Texas, Inc.
350 North St. Paul Street
Dallas, Texas 75201
(w/o enclosures)