



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 28, 2014

Mr. Jorge L. Trevino, Jr.
Assistant County Attorney
Webb County Attorney's Office
1110 Washington Street, Suite 301
Laredo, Texas 78040

OR2014-07032

Dear Mr. Trevino:

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# 520898.

The Webb County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information pertaining to a specified former employee. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.152 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the sheriff's office's procedural obligations under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving the request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e). You inform us the sheriff's office received this request on February 11, 2014. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office comments explaining why the stated exceptions apply, nor have you submitted a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find that the sheriff's office has failed to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the requested information is public and must be released unless a compelling reason exists to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166

S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a compelling reason to withhold information exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third party interests are at stake. Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). You assert that the requested information is confidential under sections 552.108 and 552.152 of the Government Code. In failing to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301, you have waived your claim under section 552.108. Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 5 (2000) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 522 (1989) (discretionary exceptions in general). Accordingly, the requested information may not be withheld under section 552.108. Furthermore, by failing to submit any information for our review, we have no basis for finding it confidential under section 552.152. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code.

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,



Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/akg

Ref: ID# 520898

c: Requestor