



Office of the Attorney General
State of Texas

DAN MORALES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

August 24, 1994

Ms. Laura S. Groce
Law Offices of Henslee, Ryan & Groce
Great Hills Plaza
9600 Great Hills Trail, Suite 300 West
Austin, Texas 78759-6303

OR94-487

Dear Ms. Groce:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Open Records Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code (former article 6252-17a, V.T.C.S.¹). You assert that the requested information is excepted from required public disclosure under section 552.103 (former section 3(a)(3) of the Open Records Act). Your request was assigned ID# 24170.

The Open Records Act imposes a duty on governmental bodies seeking an open records decision pursuant to section 552.301 to submit that request to the attorney general within 10 days after the governmental body's receipt of the request for information. The time limitation found in section 552.301 is an express legislative recognition of the importance of having public information produced in a timely fashion. *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.--Austin 1990, no writ). When a request for an open records decision is not made within the time period prescribed by section 552.301, the requested information is presumed to be public. See Gov't Code § 552.302. This presumption of openness can only be overcome by a compelling demonstration that the information should not be made public. See, e.g., Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977) (presumption of openness overcome by a showing that the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third party interests).

¹We note that the Seventy-third Legislature repealed article 6252-17a, V.T.C.S. Acts 1993, 73d Leg., ch. 268, § 46. The Open Records Act is now codified in the Government Code at chapter 552. *Id.* § 1. The codification of the Open Records Act in the Government Code is a nonsubstantive revision. *Id.* § 47.

We realize that the short time frame prescribed by section 552.301 may occasionally impose a substantial burden on governmental bodies seeking to comply with the act. Accordingly, when we receive an otherwise timely request for an open records decision that lacks some information necessary for us to make a determination, it has been our policy to give the governmental body an opportunity to complete the request. On February 14, 1994, we asked you for copies of the records at issue. To date we have not received the requested copies.

The Open Records Act places on the custodian of public records the burden of establishing that records are exempted from public disclosure. Attorney General Opinion H-436 (1974). Your request for an open records decision remains incomplete. Without the information requested from you, this office is unable to evaluate the exception you raised. Consequently, we find that you have not met your burden under sections 552.301 - .303 of the act and that the information is presumed to be public.

In the absence of a demonstration that the information is confidential by law or that other compelling reasons exist as to why the information should not be made public, you must release the information. *See also* Gov't Code § 552.352 (the distribution of confidential information is a criminal offense). If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact this office.

Yours very truly,



Rebecca L. Payne
Section Chief
Open Government Section

RLP/rho

Ref.: ID# 24170

cc: Mr. John Griffin, Jr.
Law Offices of Houston, Marek & Griffin, L.L.P.
120 Main Place, Suite 600
Victoria, Texas 77902