OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL · STATE OF TEXAS
JOHN CORNYN

November 8, 1999

Mr. Michael Kregg Phillips
Senior Attorney
Texas Department of Protective
and Regulatory Services
Post Office Box 149030
Austin, Texas 78714-9030

OR99-3151

Dear Mr. Phillips:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 130502.

Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) general 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. Act of May 25, 1999, 76th Leg., R.S., ch. 1319, § 20, 1999 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 4500, 4508 (Vernon) (to be codified as an amendment to Gov't Code § 552.301(e)). You did not, however, submit to this office a copy of the written request for information.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to submit to this office the information required in section 552.301(e) results in the legal presumption that the information is public and must be released. Act of May 25, 1999, 76th Leg., R.S., ch. 1319, § 21, 1999 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 4500, 4509 (Vernon) (to be codified as an amendment to Gov't Code § 552.302). Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *See 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

Gov't Code § 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). You have not shown such a compelling interest to overcome the presumption that the information at issue is public. Accordingly, you must release the requested information. We caution that the distribution of confidential information constitutes a criminal offense. Gov't Code § 552.352.

We are resolving this matter with an informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. This ruling is limited to the particular records at issue under the facts presented to us in this request and should not be relied on as a previous determination regarding any other records. If you have any questions regarding this ruling, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

William Walker
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

WMW/cwt

Ref: ID# 130502

Encl. Submitted documents