



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 26, 2007

Mr. James Downes
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County
2525 Holly Hall, Suite 190
Houston, Texas 77054

OR2007-02234

Dear Mr. Downes:

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# 273000.

The Harris County Hospital District (the "district") received a request for "a copy of the Texas Department of Health Services report on a site visit about a month ago and all correspondence related to the visit between the [Texas Department of Health] and [the district] subsequent to the visit." You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You inform us that the documents sought in this request are subject to a previous ruling issued by this office. On February 7, 2007, this office issued Open Records Letter No. 2007-01566 (2007), in which we held that a portion of the information at issue could only be released in accordance with the Medical Practices Act, and that the district must withhold a portion of the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 241.152 of the Health and Safety Code. We presume that the pertinent facts and circumstances have not changed since the issuance of the prior ruling. Thus, we determine that the district must continue to rely on our ruling in Open Records Letter No. 2007-01566 as a previous determination. See Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (governmental body may rely on previous determination when the records or information at issue are precisely the same records or information that were previously

submitted to this office pursuant to section 552.301(e)(1)(D); the governmental body which received the request for the records or information is the same governmental body that previously requested and received a ruling from the attorney general; the prior ruling concluded that the precise records or information are or are not excepted from disclosure under the Act; and the law, facts, and circumstances on which the prior ruling was based have not changed since the issuance of the ruling). As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your arguments against disclosure.

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

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aries Solis".

Aries Solis
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AS/eb

Ref: ID# 273000

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Bill Murphy
Houston Chronicle
801 Texas Avenue
Houston, Texas 77002
(w/o enclosures)