



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

February 4, 2008

Ms. Christi Worth  
Assistant General Counsel  
Teacher Retirement System of Texas  
1000 Red River Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2698

OR2008-01575

Dear Ms. Worth:

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# 301403.

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas (the "system") received a request for a "copy of the awarded proposal for the executive search firm RFP # 0802072S-ML." You state that you have released a portion of the requested information. You claim that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.136 of the Government Code. You also state that release of the requested information may implicate the proprietary interests of RWD Executive Search ("RWD"). Accordingly, you inform us, and provide documentation showing, that you notified RWD of the request and its right to submit arguments to this office as to why its information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d) (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) (determining that statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure in certain circumstances). We have considered the submitted argument and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, 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 requested information relating to it should be withheld from disclosure. *See id.*

§ 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, RWD has not submitted to this office any reasons explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, our office has not been provided with any basis to conclude that RWD has a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See* 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, we conclude that the system may not withhold any portion of the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest that RWD may have in the information.

Next, you claim that the submitted information contains information that is subject to section 552.136 of the Government Code. Section 552.136 of the Government Code states that “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136. The system must, therefore, withhold the insurance policy numbers it has marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. As no other arguments against disclosure of the remaining information have been made, it must be released.

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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 challenge 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,



Melanie J. Villars  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MJV/jh

Ref: ID# 301403

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Davis Morris  
Heidrick & Struggles  
600 Travis Street, Suite 6875  
Houston, Texas 77002  
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Steven D. Niss  
RWD Executive Search  
622 Third Avenue, 34<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10017  
(w/o enclosures)