



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 23, 2014

Mr. Robb D. Decker
Counsel for Southwest Independent School District
Walsh, Anderson, Gallegos, Green, and Treviño, P.C.
P.O. Box 460606
San Antonio, Texas 78246

OR2014-06629

Dear Mr. Decker:

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# 520459.

The Southwest Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for a list of all district employees that includes, via payroll deduction, affiliation with six named organizations. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.136, and 552.139 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. This office has found personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy. See Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992) (public employee's withholding allowance certificate, designation of beneficiary of employee's retirement benefits, direct deposit authorization, and employee's decisions regarding voluntary benefits

programs, among others, are protected under common-law privacy), 545 (1990) (deferred compensation information, mortgage payments, assets, bills, and credit history).

The submitted information consists of information derived from the district's payroll records. You state this information reveals the decisions of district employees to pay union dues through payroll deduction. You further state the decision to pay union dues through payroll deduction is a personal financial decision. Thus, we find the information reflecting an employee's decision to pay union dues through payroll deduction constitutes personal financial information in which there is no legitimate public interest. Accordingly, based on your arguments and our review, we agree the submitted information satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the district must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.¹

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,



Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CLS/tch

Ref: ID# 520459

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.