



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 13, 2016

Mr. Jameson C. Baker
Counsel for the Southside Independent School District
Walsh Gallegos Trevino Russo & Kyle, P.C.
P.O. Box 460606
San Antonio, Texas 78246

OR2016-13392

Dear Mr. Baker:

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# 614592.

The Southside Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received two requests from the same requestor for the salary of a named district employee and all letters sent by the district's human resources department to any current or former district employees informing them of terminations, demotions with pay decrease, or reassignment during a specified period of time. You state the district will release some of the requested information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part:

- (a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The governmental body claiming section 552.103 has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents sufficient to establish the applicability of section 552.103 to the information it seeks to withhold. To meet this burden, the governmental body must demonstrate: (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date of its receipt of the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *See Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.). Both elements of the test must be met in order for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103. *See Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990).*

You state, and provide documentation showing, prior to the district's receipt of the instant request, lawsuits styled *Balderas v. Southside Independent School District*, Cause No. 5:16-CV-00239, and *Offield v. Southside Independent School District*, Cause No. 5:16-CV-00238, were filed and are currently pending against the district in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, McAllen Division, and the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division, respectively. Therefore, we agree litigation was pending on the date the district received the present requests for information. You also state the information at issue pertains to the substance of the lawsuits claims. Based on your representations and our review, we find the information at issue is related to the pending litigations. Therefore, we conclude the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103 of the Government Code.¹

Generally, however, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigations through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982).* Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to all parties to the pending litigations is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a) and must be disclosed. Further, the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once litigation has been concluded. *See Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); see also Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).*

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.

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not consider your remaining argument against disclosure.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. A. Ybarra".

Nicholas A. Ybarra
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NAY/bw

Ref: ID# 614592

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)