



**ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS**  
**GREG ABBOTT**

December 5, 2012

Ms. Elizabeth Neally  
For Natalia Independent School District  
Walsh, Anderson, Gallegos, Green and Treviño, P.C.  
P.O. Box 460606  
San Antonio, Texas 78246

OR2012-19615

Dear Ms. Neally:

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# 472822.

The Natalia Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to the district's superintendent's clock in/out and whether he used the fingerprint system. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.153 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

Initially, we note the district seeks to withdraw its present request for an open records decision because the requestor's public information request was withdrawn by operation of law for failure to timely respond to a cost estimate for providing requested records. Upon review of a copy of the cost estimate, we find it does not comply with the requirements of section 552.2615 of the Government Code because it does not inform the requestor that inspection is an available less costly method of obtaining the requested information. See Gov't Code § 552.2615(a). Accordingly, we conclude the requestor's public information request has not been withdrawn by operation of law, and the district may not withdraw its request for a ruling on that basis.

Next, we must address the district's procedural obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public

disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body that receives a request for information it wishes to withhold under an exception to disclosure must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving the 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. Gov't Code § 552.301(e). The district received the request for information on September 14, 2012. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted arguments explaining why the stated exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the specific information requested. Consequently, we find the district failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301(e) of the Government Code.

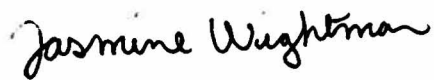
Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the information is public and must be released, unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Normally, a compelling reason exists when third-party interests are at stake or when information is confidential under the Act or other law. Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977). Because the district has failed to comply with the requirements of the Act, the district has waived all of its claimed discretionary exceptions to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Furthermore, because you have not submitted the information to this office for our review, we have no basis for finding it confidential under the claimed mandatory exceptions. Thus, we have no choice but to order you to release the responsive information in accordance with section 552.302 of the Government Code. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code.

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.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), 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 must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jasmine Wightman".

Jasmine D. Wightman  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JDW/dls

Ref: ID# 472822

c: Requestor