



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 26, 2019

Ms. Christina L. Ford
Assistant County Attorney
El Paso County
500 East San Antonio, Room 503
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2019-05388

Dear Ms. Ford:

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# 751911 (ORR OP-18-704).

The El Paso County Attorney's Office (the "county attorney's office") received a request for all current contracts for the provision of online legal research. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of Thomson Reuters Westlaw ("Westlaw"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Westlaw of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We reviewed the submitted information.

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 information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from Westlaw explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude Westlaw has a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110; 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, the county attorney's office may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest Westlaw may have in the information. As no exceptions to disclosure have been raised, the county attorney's office must release the submitted information.

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,



Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PS/som

Ref: ID# 751911

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party
(w/o enclosures)