



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 20, 2019

Mr. Jonathan Miles  
Open Records Attorney  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
P.O. Box 13247  
Austin, Texas 78711-3247

OR2019-16838

Dear Mr. Miles:

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# 771514 (HHSC Ref. No. 18154).

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (the "commission") received a request for information pertaining to a specified solicitation.<sup>1</sup> Although the commission takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, the commission states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Vets Securing America, Inc. ("VSA"). Accordingly, the commission states, and provides documentation showing, it notified VSA 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 have reviewed the submitted information.

---

<sup>1</sup>We note the commission sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding when governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification of unclear or overbroad request for public information, ten-business-day period to request attorney general opinion is measured from date request is clarified or narrowed).

We note 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 VSA. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude VSA has a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information, and the commission may not withhold any portion of it on that basis. *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 commission 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](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,



D. Michelle Case  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

DMC/gw

Ref: ID# 771514

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

c: Third Party  
(w/o enclosures)