

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 671
By: Shapleigh
State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Under Section 552.008 (Information for Legislative Purposes), Texas Government Code, the Texas Public Information Act requires governmental bodies to provide public information, including confidential information, to legislators when the requesting legislator specifies that the information is being requested for legislative purposes. The code also provides that the governmental body may require the requesting legislator to sign a confidentiality agreement with regard to any confidential information released under Section 552.008.

The code, however, does not provide for a process by which the requesting legislator can determine whether information potentially made subject to a confidentiality agreement is indeed confidential. As a result, the governmental body could make potentially non-confidential information subject to a confidentiality agreement.

S.B. 671 amends current law relating to information requested by a member, committee, or agency of the legislature under the public information law.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the attorney general in SECTION 1 (Section 552.008, Government Code) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 671 amends Section 552.008, Government Code, by adding Subsections (b-1) and (b-2), to authorize a member, committee, or agency of the legislature required by a governmental body to sign a confidentiality agreement under Subsection (b) to seek a decision as provided by Subsection (b-2) about whether the information covered by the confidentiality agreement is confidential under law. Provides that a confidentiality agreement signed under Subsection (b) is void to the extent that the agreement covers information that is finally determined under Subsection (b-2) to not be confidential under law. S.B. 671 authorizes the member, committee, or agency of the legislature, alternatively, to seek a decision from the attorney general about the matter. Requires the attorney general by rule to establish procedures and deadlines for receiving information necessary to decide the matter and briefs from the requestor, the governmental body, and any other interested person. Requires the attorney general to promptly render a decision requested under this subsection, determining whether the information covered by the confidentiality agreement is confidential under law, not later than the 45th business day after the date the attorney general received the request for a decision under this subsection. Requires the attorney general to issue a written decision on the matter and provide a copy of the decision to the requestor, the governmental body, and any other interested person who submitted necessary information or a brief to the attorney general about the matter. Authorizes the requestor or the governmental body to appeal a decision of the attorney general under this subsection to a Travis County district court. Authorizes a person to appeal a decision of the attorney general under this subsection to a Travis County district court if the person claims a proprietary interest in the information affected by the decision or a privacy interest in the information that a confidentiality law or judicial decision is designed to protect.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2010.