

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the right of directors of special districts to obtain district information, documents, and records.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 201, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Section 201.010 to read as follows:

Sec. 201.010. SPECIAL RIGHT OF ACCESS TO DISTRICT INFORMATION BY DISTRICT DIRECTOR. (a) In this section:

(1) "Board" means the governing body of a special district.

(2) "Director" means a board member.

(3) "Public information" has the meaning assigned by Section 552.002, Government Code.

(4) "Special district" means a political subdivision of this state that has a limited geographic area and is created by local law or under general law for a special purpose. The term does not include a school district or hospital district.

(b) A director of a special district has a right of access to information that is public information of the district.

(c) A special district on request by a director of the district shall provide public information, including confidential information or information otherwise excepted from disclosure, to the director in accordance with Chapter 552, Government Code.

(d) A special district, by providing public information to a

1 director under this section that is confidential or otherwise
2 excepted from required disclosure under law, does not waive or
3 affect the confidentiality of the information for purposes of state
4 or federal law or waive the right of the district to assert
5 exceptions to required disclosure of the information in the future.
6 The district may require the requesting director or a designated
7 district employee of the requesting director who will view or
8 handle information that is received under this section and that is
9 confidential under law or otherwise excepted from disclosure to
10 sign a confidentiality agreement that covers the information and
11 requires that:

12 (1) the information not be disclosed outside the
13 office of the requesting director or within that office for
14 purposes other than the purpose for which it was received;

15 (2) the information be labeled as confidential;

16 (3) the information be kept securely; or

17 (4) the number of copies made of the information or the
18 notes taken from the information that implicate the confidential
19 nature of the information be controlled, with all copies or notes
20 that are not destroyed or returned to the district remaining
21 confidential and subject to the confidentiality agreement.

22 (e) If a director or a designated district employee is
23 required by a special district to sign a confidentiality agreement
24 under Subsection (d), the director may seek a decision as provided
25 by Subsection (f) about whether the information covered by the
26 confidentiality agreement is confidential under law or otherwise
27 excepted from disclosure. A confidentiality agreement signed under

1 Subsection (d) is void to the extent that the agreement covers
2 information that is finally determined under Subsection (f) to not
3 be confidential under law or otherwise excepted from disclosure.

4 (f) A director may seek a decision from the attorney general
5 about whether the information covered by the confidentiality
6 agreement is confidential under law or otherwise excepted from
7 disclosure. The attorney general by rule shall establish
8 procedures and deadlines for receiving information necessary to
9 determine whether the information covered by the confidentiality
10 agreement is confidential under law or otherwise excepted from
11 disclosure and for receiving briefs from the requesting director,
12 the special district, and any other interested person. The
13 attorney general shall render the decision not later than the 45th
14 business day after the date the attorney general receives the
15 request for a decision. If the attorney general is unable to issue
16 the decision within the 45-day period, the attorney general may
17 during that 45-day period extend the period for issuing the
18 decision by an additional 10 business days by informing the
19 director, the special district, and any interested person who
20 submitted necessary information or a brief to the attorney general
21 of the reason for the delay. The attorney general shall issue a
22 written decision and provide a copy of the decision to the
23 requesting director, the special district, and any interested
24 person who submitted necessary information or a brief to the
25 attorney general under this subsection. The requesting director or
26 the special district may appeal a decision of the attorney general
27 under this subsection to a district court. A person may appeal a

1 decision of the attorney general under this subsection to a
2 district court if the person claims a proprietary interest in the
3 information affected by the decision or a privacy interest in the
4 information that a confidentiality law or judicial decision is
5 designed to protect.

6 (g) This section does not affect:

7 (1) the right of a director of a special district to
8 obtain information from the district under other law;

9 (2) the procedures under which the information is
10 obtained under other law; or

11 (3) the use that may be made of the information
12 obtained under other law.

13 (h) This section does not grant authority to a special
14 district to withhold information from a director of the district.

15 SECTION 2. Section 201.010, Local Government Code, as added
16 by this Act, applies only to a request for information by a director
17 of a special district that is made on or after the effective date of
18 this Act. A request for information made before the effective date
19 of this Act is governed by the applicable law in effect immediately
20 before the effective date of this Act, and that law is continued in
21 effect for that purpose.

22 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
23 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
24 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
25 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
26 Act takes effect September 1, 2015.