HB 3015

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: April 14, 2021 8:00 AM

Gregory Romeu

DevilsAdvocateArmory.com

Presidio, TX

Only full transparency and open records is the success of a well disciplined and properly operational government body FOR The People. To otherwise create deep and misleading bureaucracies is a discredit to the State, The State Agency and the State Agent(s) involved in an act to otherwise prevent whatever information that ANY State of Texas taxpayer should be privy to ask for and expediently receive. Else there are matters of the state elected and appointed officials that need further investigation as to WHY such a Bill needs to be created in the first place?

Donnis Baggett

Texas Press Association

Bryan, TX

The Texas Press Association strongly supports HB 3015. Currently, the Texas Public Information Act does not require a governmental official to provide a response to a requester when the official believes the information being sought is excepted from disclosure. The requester is left to wonder what happened, and whether the governmental agency received his or her request. Common sense — and common courtesy — would seem to dictate some sort of acknowledgement of receipt at the very least. That, unfortunately, is not always the way things are handled. HB 3015 would require an official who withholds information to state that they received the request and say why they believe they're not required to provide it. That is not asking too much.We thank Vice Chair Hernandez for filing HB 3015. It is long overdue and we urge its passage.

Linda Pavlik

League of Women Voters of Texas

Fort Worth, TX

The League of Women Voters of Texas strongly supports the details and specificity that is spelled out in this proposed legislation. A request for public information must be deemed official, warranting timely response from local entities and the Attorney General's office.

Diana Fuentes

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San Antonio, TX

In my experience as a journalist of more than 30 years seeking to keep the communities I have served informed, the lack of government agencies' response to requests for public information has been a serious concern. It doesn't happen always and some agencies are much better than others. But in recent years, we have seen problems with the City of San Antonio. Here are a few examples.
On Jan. 17, 2020 — last year — the San Antonio Express-News requested records on how much was paid to the mayor and City Council members for travel. Those are standard public records, and the coronavirus pandemic hadn't even started. Our reporter, Josh Fechter, clarified his request Feb. 7, 2020, and followed up on March 5, 2020, and didn’t hear back. Nothing. For an entire

year. He asked again on March 12, 2021. On April 8, 2021, we finally received the requested records — 16 months after the initial request.

On July 31, 2020, Fechter requested communications between Mayor Ron Nirenberg, his staff and officials with VIA Metropolitan Transit about negotiations over a pair of sales tax initiatives of major concern to voters. We heard nothing.The city resumed "business days" on Nov. 23, 2020, and we still heard nothing. Fechter followed up March 24, 2021, and has not received a response.

On April 13, 2020, and May 22, 2020, Fechter requested communications from several city leaders, the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District and other agencies regarding specifics about the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have heard nothing about those requests. Not a single word.

There is a pressing need for HB 3015 and support its passage. Thank you.