

By: Capriglione, Talarico, Leo-Wilson, Cook,  
Cain

H.B. No. 2493

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to maintenance and production of electronic public information under the public information law.

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

SECTION 1. Section 552.002(a-2), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a-2) The definition of "public information" provided by Subsection (a) applies to and includes:

(1) any electronic communication created, transmitted, received, or maintained on any device if the communication is in connection with the transaction of official business; and

(2) a data dictionary or other indicia of the type or category of information held in the applicable field of a database, other than metadata that directly implicates database security.

SECTION 2. Subchapter E, Chapter 552, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 552.2285 to read as follows:

Sec. 552.2285. ELECTRONIC PUBLIC INFORMATION. (a) In this section "electronic public information" means public information that is produced and maintained in an electronic spreadsheet or database that is searchable or sortable.

(b) The use of an electronic recordkeeping system by or for a governmental body may not erode the public's right of access to public information under this chapter. The contents of electronic

1 public information, including information covered by Section  
2 552.002(a-2), is significant and not merely used as a tool for the  
3 maintenance, manipulation, or protection of property.

4 (c) If a request for public information applies to  
5 electronic public information and the requestor requests the  
6 electronic public information in a searchable or sortable format,  
7 the person responding to the request shall provide an electronic  
8 copy of the requested electronic public information in the  
9 searchable or sortable format requested using computer software the  
10 person uses in the ordinary course of business to access, support,  
11 program, manipulate, or otherwise manage the governmental body's  
12 information. If the requestor prefers, the person responding to  
13 the request shall provide a copy of electronic public information  
14 in the form of a paper printout.

15 (d) A person responding to a request for public information  
16 may not:

17 (1) refuse to provide a copy of electronic public  
18 information on the grounds that exporting the information or  
19 redacting excepted information will require searching, sorting, or  
20 filtering the information with computer software used by the person  
21 in the ordinary course of business to access, support, or otherwise  
22 manage the governmental body's information; or

23 (2) except for charges specifically authorized by  
24 rules adopted under Section 552.262, charge the requestor for  
25 searching, sorting, or filtering the information as provided by  
26 Subdivision (1).

27 (e) A requestor may request that a copy of electronic public

1 information be provided in the format in which the information is  
2 maintained by or for the governmental body or in a standard export  
3 format such as a flat file electronic American Standard Code for  
4 Information Interchange (ASCII) if the computer programs used by or  
5 for the governmental body support exporting the information in that  
6 format. The person responding to the request shall provide the copy  
7 in the requested format or in another format acceptable to the  
8 requestor. The person responding to the request shall provide the  
9 copy through an electronic transfer such as electronic mail or an  
10 electronic drop box if possible, or otherwise on suitable  
11 electronic media.

12 (f) If electronic public information is maintained in a  
13 format that is:

14 (1) searchable but not sortable, the person responding  
15 to the request shall provide an electronic copy of the information  
16 in a searchable format that complies with this section; or

17 (2) sortable, the person responding to the request  
18 shall provide an electronic copy of the information in a sortable  
19 format that complies with this section.

20 (g) Each party to a contract for the creation and  
21 maintenance of electronic public information by or for a  
22 governmental body shall use reasonable efforts to ensure the  
23 contract does not impair the public's ability to inspect or copy the  
24 information or make the information more difficult for the public  
25 to inspect or copy than records maintained by the governmental  
26 body.

27 (h) This section applies to public information for which a

1 third party is the custodian for the governmental body.

2 (i) This section does not affect the applicability to  
3 electronic public information of a confidentiality provision or  
4 other exception from required disclosure.

5 (j) Subchapter F applies to an electronic copy or paper  
6 printout of electronic public information.

7 SECTION 3. Section 118.011(e), Local Government Code, is  
8 amended to read as follows:

9 (e) A county clerk who provides a copy in a format other than  
10 paper of a record maintained by the clerk shall provide the copy and  
11 charge a fee in accordance with Section [~~Sections 552.231 and~~  
12 552.262, Government Code.

13 SECTION 4. Section 552.231, Government Code, is repealed.

14 SECTION 5. The changes in law made by this Act apply only to  
15 a request for public information received on or after the effective  
16 date of this Act.

17 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.