

- SUBJECT:** Exempting adoptive pet owners from public information laws
- COMMITTEE:** Government Efficiency and Reform — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Harper-Brown, Perry, Capriglione, Stephenson, Scott Turner, Vo  
0 nays  
1 absent — Taylor
- WITNESSES:** For —Kathy Davis, City of San Antonio, Animal Care Services; Cheryl Schneider, Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter; Abigail Smith, City of Austin; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Larry Casto, City of Dallas; Jeff Coyle, City of San Antonio; Greg Damianoff, City of Houston-Animal Control; Cary Grace, City of Austin; Mark Israelson, City of Plano; Robert “Skip” Trimble, Texas Humane Legislation Network)  
  
Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Charles Jackson, City of Houston-BARC)
- BACKGROUND:** Government Code, ch. 552 sets forth guidelines for public information. Subch. C describes information that is excepted from required public disclosure.
- DIGEST:** HB 2471 would amend Government Code, ch. 552, subch. C by adding an exception from the required public disclosure for individuals who adopt pets from public animal shelters. The bill would apply to personally identifying information, such as an individual’s name, driver’s license number, or telephone number. This exception would occur when an individual obtained ownership of an unclaimed stray animal after the required impoundment period at an animal shelter had expired.  
  
The bill would allow the identifying information to be shared with person’s performing governmental work related to public health and safety, such as animal registration services. The information would be considered confidential and could not be used for purposes unrelated to public health and safety.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2013.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

In recent years, municipal animal shelters have begun implementing no-kill policies. As a result, pet adoptions have significantly increased. Currently, when cities require the registration of pets, a pet owner's information is not made available to the public. However, most information contained in a municipal animal shelter's records is public information, including the name, address, phone number and other identifying information of adoptive pet owners.

The public availability of this information has led to instances of conflicts and harassment of citizens who adopted from a local shelter. The bill would keep personal contact information of a person or rescue group confidential after the final disposition of a pet adoption. In order for cities to maintain no-kill policies, it is imperative that this information be kept confidential.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

The bill would create yet another exception to the state's public information laws. The role of the Legislature should be to seek the overall good by ensuring transparency. While there may have been isolated instances in which adoptive pet owners were harassed, these are exceptions. Most pet adoptions go smoothly, without the occurrence of such problems.