

Laura Prather: Secrecy Reigns as Information Requests Almost Always Denied by Attorney General

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Haynes Boone Partner [Laura Prather](#) talked with *ABC News* in Houston about how the Texas Attorney General's office is increasingly denying citizens' open records requests for public information.

Here is an excerpt:

When requests for information were sent to the Attorney General in 2018, the information was only fully released 5.4 percent of the time, according to the analysis.

In 2018, agencies across Texas asked the Attorney General to keep information secret using that exception 16,739 times, the most-used exception to open records law by far. It worked 98 percent of the time.

"It really is tragic," said Laura Prather, partner with law firm Haynes Boone. "Texas used to have one of the best sunshine laws in the entire nation. Other states look to Texas as an example, and now it is considered one of the worst. It is the only state in the nation where a private company can prevent a taxpayer from getting the final contract with the government."

Prather is a part of the newly-formed Sunshine Coalition described as a "non-partisan, grassroots coalition protecting open government and your right to know." Members include groups from both sides of the political aisle: ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], Center for Public Policies, the League of Women Voters and the Texas Public Policy Foundation to name a few.

They mobilized after a series of decisions by the Texas Supreme Court that led to dramatic changes and radical increases in secrecy.

"When you do business with the government, the taxpayers should have the right to know how their money is being spent."

There are a number of bills filed this session aimed to repairing the law. Some of the more significant progress made in the last legislative session were killed in committee, despite broad bipartisan support.

Prather has more hope this time around after the chair of that committee lost reelection in 2018. But aside from that, Prather's optimism rests in her partners in the Sunshine Coalition.

"We have this broad based coalition that has helped spread the word to people on both sides of the aisle about the importance of the issue," Prather said.

To read the full article, click [here](#).