



Blagojevich signed adoption reforms in '05

Saturday, February 25, 2006 11:04 A.M

By Dan Gearino

DES MOINES – Illinois Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, led the push in her state for across-the-board adoption reforms passed last year. She thinks other states can learn from Illinois' experience.

"I just think that every state needs to protect their families," she said.

Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, a Democrat, signed the Adoption Reform Act in August, a measure sponsored by Feigenholtz. The new law requires adoption service providers to be licensed by the state and gives state regulators greater power to investigate complaints.

For-profit adoption companies are banned, with few exceptions. To most Illinois residents, the inspiration for the bill seemed to be the Baby Tamia case, a high-profile legal battle in which a Chicago woman said she was coerced to relocate to Utah and place her child for adoption. The baby eventually was returned to her family in Chicago.

Feigenholtz said the Baby Tamia story was not the first of its kind, but it was the most highly publicized, giving energy to existing reform efforts. "The Tamia case didn't hurt us. Believe me, it really may have catapulted our bill and given us a leg up," she said.

Feigenholtz said her research showed that for-profit adoption companies find states with few adoption rules and set up shop there, often shipping women into those states to give birth, even if the adoptive family is from elsewhere in the country.

"They go through statute after statute, state after state, to see where they can get away with this, and they do it," she said.

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