



Bill on adoption advances in Springfield

By [Kathleen Foody](#)

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
03/19/2010

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Adults adopted as children would have access to their birth certificates under legislation that passed the Illinois House on Thursday.

The bill represents more than 15 years of work for sponsoring Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, an adoptee herself. Feigenholtz said data from Illinois and other states show birth parents contacted by adopted children overwhelmingly consent to give medical or other personal information.

"No matter what the circumstances (of the birth) are, we see that they never wanted protection from their offspring," she said. "But this bill respects the minority of birth mothers who choose to keep their identities secret, so it's the most perfectly balanced bill possible."

Adult adoptees cannot see their birth certificate without permission of a birth parent or a member of that family. Feigenholtz's bill would allow them to get a copy unless the birth mother chooses to keep her information private.

An information campaign about the changes is also included in the bill, now headed to the state Senate. Birth mothers would have until Jan. 1, 2011, to select their preferences. If a birth mother did not contact the state before that date, her child's birth certificate would be made available.

Several state representatives questioned whether that was fair to mothers who may want to keep their information private but do not hear of the change to the law. Feigenholtz said the bill isn't perfect, but she added that her own experience demonstrates adoptive children need access.

"I filed a bill similar to this when I first got to Springfield and it didn't pass," she said. "What it (did) was generate just boxes and boxes of mail, people begging me to help them find their family."