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## **Bill would give adoptees access to their birth certificates**

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SPRINGFIELD — Adult adoptees would be able to obtain a copy of their birth certificates under a measure advancing in the Illinois General Assembly. Over objections that the proposal goes too far or not far enough, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved House Bill 5428 on Tuesday after an hour-long debate before a packed committee room.

Supported by the Chicago and Illinois State bar associations, HB 5428 would amend the state's Adoption Act to provide adult adoptees with an avenue to access a non-certified copy of their original birth certificates.

Under current law, adopted persons are issued a birth certificate with the names of their adopted parents while their original certificate listing their birth parents' names gets sealed. The bill's sponsors, Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, and Sen. [Arthur J. Wilhelmi](#), D-Joliet, told the committee that adopted parents currently have a limited amount of time following the adoption when they can ask the court for the adoption decree, which lists the birth parents' names.

Adopted persons seeking such information, however, must go through the state's confidential intermediary program or adult registry, which Wilhelmi described as cumbersome and often ineffective processes.

HB 5428 would also create a committee to oversee a year-long informational campaign. It would not only let adult adoptees know about the change, but would inform birth parents that they have until Jan. 1, 2011, to make a request to keep their identifying information anonymous.

Sen. [William R. Haine](#), D-Alton, said "silence should not be used as an assent." He voiced concern that the measure would go against a promise the state made in 1946, when it enacted a law that sealed such records. He said it was unfair to presume that a birth parent's failure to request anonymity means he or she approves the release of their identifying information.

Several adult adoptees voiced their opposition to the measure, arguing that it doesn't go far enough to provide adoptees full access to their birth certificates.

On behalf of The Chicago Bar Association's Adoption Law Committee, [Linda S. Coon](#) said Wednesday that she believes the bill, which the CBA has been working on for three years, provides a balance between the birth parent's and adopted child's rights.

Also on Tuesday, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the following measures:

- House Bill 5918, which would amend the Good Samaritan Act to prevent people who in good faith and without willful and wanton misconduct provide emergency care from being liable for civil damages. The measure was approved by the House last month and now heads to the full Senate.

- House Bill 6124, which would extend the statute of limitations for actions for damages based on childhood sexual abuse from 10 years to 20 years or within 20 years (instead of five) of the date the person abused discovered the abuse occurred. The bill now goes to a full vote in the Senate.

- House Bill 6477, which makes numerous changes to the state's Power of Attorney Act. The measure, which was pushed by the ISBA, was approved by the House last month and awaits Senate action.

In other legislative news, Gov. [Patrick J. Quinn](#) was expected to sign the proposed pension reform measure —Senate Bill 1946 — into law on Wednesday afternoon.

Under SB 1946, which was sent to the governor late last month after passing out of both chambers of the General Assembly in about 10 hours, a new pension system would be created for state employees hired next year.

The measure would require judges to work seven years longer — from 60 to 67 — to receive full retirement benefits. It would also reduce their pensions to 60 percent of their final average annual salaries instead of the current 85 percent and cap annual benefits at \$106,800.

Legislation can be found on the [Illinois General Assembly Web site](#).

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