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Lawmakers Pass Big Change To Adoption Privacy Act

New Law Would Make It Easier For Adoptees To Learn Birth Parents' Names



Reporting
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Tellez

CHICAGO (CBS) — For people who are adopted, a new measure just approved by the Illinois General Assembly could help solve the biggest mystery of their life: who gave birth to them.

If Gov. Pat Quinn signs the proposal, Illinois would open adoption records to adults who were

adopted.

CBS 2's Roseanne Tellez talked people on both sides of this emotional issue.

The Illinois Adoption Privacy Act would open records dating back to 1946, allowing adoptees access to their birth certificates.

[Read the legislation by clicking here.](#)

Currently, state law automatically protects the privacy of the biological mother in birth records, unless she asks that her name be revealed to the adoptee. Under the new law, her name would be available automatically to the adoptee, unless she asks that her name be shielded.

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago) sponsored the measure. She found her own birth mother.

"It's the final puzzle piece of my life," Feigenholtz said. "I have kept her name quiet because she made a request."

Feigenholtz said that adopted adults are too often portrayed as stalkers, when in reality they are more interested in knowing who their parents are than actually finding them.

"This is really more about adoptees who don't want to be forced to make an outreach, but only want to know their truth," Feigenholtz said.



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Illinois State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), who was adopted, sponsored legislation that would make it easier for adoptees to learn who their biological parents are. The bill is awaiting the governor's signature.

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But Former State Rep Penny Pullen said the state is breaking a contract.

Despite the provision that allows a biological mother to keep her name private, Pullen said, "The problem is that the state has always guaranteed privacy and now that is changing."

Going forward, the bill will give parents giving up a child the option of privacy. For people who have already given up children, the records will now be open to their adult children, unless they contact the state and ask for privacy.

A public service campaign will be conducted to get the word out before the law takes effect in Nov. 2011.

"There will be people affected by this who no longer live in Illinois. They live in Idaho and won't see news releases from the Illinois department of disclosure," Pullen said. "This is going to truly disrupt families."

Julie Tye, president of The Cradle, an Illinois adoption center, said the secrecy that once surrounded adoption has largely disappeared.

Feigenholtz said that there are already many tools available to help people find their birth parents. In fact, any adoptive parents can request a copy of the adoption decree.

Feigenholtz said she feels the people this law helps the most are those who want to see their birth certificate and possibly learn more about their adoption, without meeting their birth parents and risking rejection.

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