



[E-mail](#) [Print](#) [Share +](#) [Comments \(2\)](#)

May 21, 2010 5:32 pm US/Central

## New Law Allows Greater Access To Adoption Info

### Legislation Makes Birth Records More Accessible To Adopted Adults



Reporting  
Roseanne  
Tellez

CHICAGO (CBS) — Finding out about your family history is about to get easier for thousands of people in Illinois who are adopted.

As CBS 2's Roseanne Tellez reports, a new law signed on Friday will open a door to their past that has been locked shut for decades



◀ 1 of 1 ▶ [Click to enlarge](#)

Illinois State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), who was adopted, sponsored legislation that makes it easier for adoptees to learn who their biological parents are.  
CBS

Gov. Pat Quinn signed legislation Friday that makes it easier for adoptees to get their original birth certificate, which normally is sealed.

Under the new legislation, adoptees born before Jan. 1, 1946 can get their birth certificates right away. Adoptees born after that date will have to wait until next November.

Under the prior law, it was difficult for an adopted person to access their original birth certificate because getting a copy of the document often required a court order.

The law was sponsored by State Rep Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago). She is adopted and now Feigenholtz will see her birth certificate for the very first time.

"And on it will be the name of the woman who gave birth to me 53 years ago. I can't wait to hold it in my hand," Feigenholtz said.

CBS-2's Roseanne Tellez spoke to a family that knows first-hand why this new law is so important.

In 1967, Melisha Mitchell was 20 years old and unmarried when she gave up a child for adoption. She went on to raise a family of four, keeping her first baby secret, until a family tragedy. One of her children died. It was enough to convince her to track down her oldest daughter.

"I wrote her a 63-page letter," Mitchell said. "Her response was a 15-page letter. And she was

just as elated to be found, I think, as I was to find her."

Her daughter, Elizabeth Hutchison said when she got the letter, "my first thought was it's about time."

The Chicago Sun-Times covered the mother and daughter's happy reunion. Hutchison knew she was adopted, but never knew who she looked like.

Hutchison, who was 28 at the time, said her adopted parents were supportive.

"They were happy for me and they just kept saying, 'Oh, she looks just like you.' You know, usually it's the other way around."

Mitchell said that, in the past, everyone assumed – often mistakenly – that birth parents wanted anonymity.

"It's really a very, very small minority of the parents who really seek anonymity. And they get it under this law," Mitchell said.

So what's Hutchison's perspective on the new law?

"I think it's wonderful. I think everyone has a biological right to know where they come from. Like I said, I had a lot of anger about not knowing where I came from," she said.

Parents can still ask to remain anonymous, but now they're also asked if they'd like to provide their description, talents and medical information – details to one day fill in the blanks when the child they put up for adoption wants to know.

State officials will launch a major public information campaign between now and then so that parents who gave babies up, but don't want any information released, can contact the Illinois Adoption Registry and let them know that. The burden is on the parent to request anonymity.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

(© MMX, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.)