

# Hundreds of IL adoptees born before 1946 get birth certificate for first time

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• [Springfield Political Buzz Examiner](#)

• **(Chicago) – June 9, 2011.** On the first anniversary of a new Illinois law that allows adult adoptees to secure their original birth certificate without a court order, new statistics from the state’s public health agency reveal that 645 Illinois-born adoptees born before 1946 have done so.

“This law allows adopted adults to obtain a non-certified copy of their original birth certificate and review important personal information, helping them learn more about their birth families,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. **Damon T. Arnold**, appearing today at a press conference in Chicago.

**“Requests from Illinois-born applicants have been received from as far away as France and Australia.”**

In the U.S., after Illinois, the greatest number of requests have come from individuals living in Florida, California, Arizona and Wisconsin.

In addition to adult adoptees born prior to 1946, the new law, PA 096-089, signed by Governor **Pat Quinn** on May 21, 2010, allows adult adoptees born on or after January 1, 1946, to apply for their original birth certificate starting on November 15, 2011.

“I learned my name for the first time,” said Berwyn resident **Joel Chrastka**, 73, who was the first Illinois resident to receive his birth certificate under the new law earlier this year.

Chrastka was born “William James Ferry”.

Under previous state law, adult adoptees usually encountered insurmountable legal obstacles in gaining access to their original birth certificate.

“On November 15, I will be able to mail my application to the state’s office of Vital Records, enclose my \$15, and get a copy of my original birth certificate. 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,” said State Rep. **Sara Feigenholtz**. (D-Chicago), an adoptee and the law’s chief sponsor.

“The birth certificate allows someone to complete the picture of their life,” said former WGN radio personality **Steve Cochran**, an adult adoptee, who appeared at the press conference at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago’s loop. “It becomes a treasured memento.”

Starting on or after November 15, 2011, post-1946 Illinois-born adoptees can send in their application to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. Once processed, a copy of the birth certificate will be mailed to the requester via U.S. Mail.

It is estimated that there are more than 250,000 adult adopted persons who were born in Illinois after 1946.

Under the new law, birth parents of post-1946 adoptees can request that their names not be released during their lifetime by filing a birth parent preference form with the Illinois Adoption Registry and Medical Information Exchange.

**“Birth parents who do not want their names released during their lifetime should file a birth parent preference form before November 1, 2011, to ensure their information is not released when adopted or surrendered persons become eligible to apply for copies of their original birth certificates,” said Dr. Arnold.**

Since January 2010, when Feigenholtz filed the original legislation for the new law, 95 birth parents have requested anonymity, while 336 birth parents have asked that their names and contact information be shared with their birth children, Dr. Arnold noted.

As part of the new law, an advisory council to IDPH, which administers the program, has been engaged in a year-long campaign to inform and educate adopted adults and birth parents, who may prefer anonymity, regarding the change to Illinois law.

For more information, please visit: [www.newillinoisadoptionlaw.com](http://www.newillinoisadoptionlaw.com).

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