



### Ill. adoptees can now get birth certificates

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November 15, 2011 (CHICAGO) (WLS) -- A new law allows adoptees to connect with their past. Thousands of people are filling out applications allowing them to get a copy of their original birth certificate.

Before the law took effect Tuesday those birth certificates were under seal. Now, many adoptees will be able to learn the identities of their birth parents and even their own original names, though critics of the law say there could be unintended consequences.

For a few dollars and the flick of a pen, adoptee Brook Horwitz will soon unlock a lifetime's worth of mysteries.

"What really is a virtual birthright for anyone else in this country is something that we've never seen," said Horwitz. "Six decades I've never seen my original birth certificate."

Horwitz, who was adopted as a little girl, reunited with her birth mother just three days before her death. Now, thanks to the new law, she hopes to learn more about the family she hardly knew.

"I think it will confirm, first of all, my birth father and perhaps some additional information about him, including his occupation," Horwitz said.

The law was sponsored by State Representative Sara Feigenholtz, who was herself adopted.

Tuesday, at the Illinois records office in Springfield, Feigenholtz submitted birth certificate applications for dozens of adoptees.

"It means a lot for them to be able to peek at that first chapter of their life and answer some very significant questions about who they are," said Feigenholtz.

The law, which was signed by Governor Pat Quinn 18 months ago, allows birth parents to remain anonymous if they notify the state.

The secretary of state's office sent out a flier to many homes, but critics of the law say those efforts weren't enough.

Ralph Rivera of Illinois Citizens for Life has two adopted children of his own, and while he says parents and children should be reunited if both so choose, he fears the new law will have unintended consequences for young women.

"If they're struggling with this, and they think that what the state of Illinois did in wiping out decades of privacy could come to them in 10, 20 years, they may not choose to place for adoption. They may choose abortion," Rivera said.

But many say the law reflects the new culture of adoption.

"We have gone from a different era where there was a stigma attached to single motherhood," said White Oak Foundation's David Ormsby. "The standards of adoption in the industry have changed. They have evolved. There's a more open and transparent attitude."

The law applies to adoptees who were born on or after January 1, 1946.

The application form can be found on the [Illinois Department of Public Health website](#).

Officials say it could take months before everything is processed and birth certificates are mailed out. But many adoptees have been waiting for decades and are willing to wait a little longer.

**For more information, visit [www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/index.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/index.htm)**