



## Illinois busy complying with new adoption law

Kurt Erickson | Posted: Thursday, December 15, 2011 2:15 pm | [No Comments Posted](#)

SPRINGFIELD — State public health officials have been flooded with more than 4,100 applications from adoptees seeking copies of their original birth certificates.

The applications have flowed into the Illinois Department of Public Health's vital records office in just a month's time as part of a landmark new law giving adopted children easier access to their birth certificates.

Previously, original birth certificates were sealed and not typically available to adoptees. But under legislation approved by the General Assembly last year, adoptees age 21 and older and born after Jan. 1, 1946, can get access to the paperwork by applying to the state public health agency.

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, who sponsored the legislation, said she had no way to determine how many people would apply for their certificates.

"I couldn't know whether it would be 2,000 or 20,000," Feigenholtz said.

Under the law, birth parents also can fill out a form to keep their information from being given to an adoptee. If that's the case, an adoptee would receive a birth certificate with the name of the parents removed.

Department records show that 431 parents requested anonymity in the first month.

Of the 4,184 applications received in the first month, 556 were either not fully completed or the applicant didn't provide their adopted name. Thus far, 150 original birth certificates have been issued by the two-person staff processing the paperwork.

Feigenholtz, an adoptee, was among the first wave of applicants who submitted their paperwork on Nov. 15. She received her birth certificate on Dec. 9 but has not opened the envelope to find out who her birth parents are. She plans to open the letter with a group of other adoptees during the filming of a documentary film on the new Illinois law. She said she hopes the film will help demystify some of the opposition to a more open adoptee records process in other states.

State Rep. Keith Sommer, a Morton Republican, voted against the legislation because of concerns about a provision affecting the records of adoptees prior to 1946. He said he also was concerned some birth parents would be taken by surprise if their children contacted them.

"People are so mobile nowadays. How are birth parents who've moved out of state going to know this happened?" asked Sommer, parent of two adopted children.

Read more: [http://www.qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/illinois/illinois-busy-complying-with-new-adoption-law/article\\_d467772a-2759-11e1-9e9f-0019bb2963f4.html#ixzz1gdpuwVie](http://www.qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/illinois/illinois-busy-complying-with-new-adoption-law/article_d467772a-2759-11e1-9e9f-0019bb2963f4.html#ixzz1gdpuwVie)