

# Chicago Tribune

## BREAKING NEWS

### **New legislation gives adoptees more access to history and Illinois at the front of a cause**

**Bonnie Miller Rubin** Tribune reporter

*10:54 a.m. CDT, July 9, 2014*

Advocates crowded into WGN Radio's showcase studio this morning to watch Gov. Pat Quinn sign historic legislation that will make it easier for adoptees to find out more about their birth family and medical history.

"People have a right to know the first chapter of their lives and should have what they need to fill in the branches on their family tree," Quinn said. "This new law will help adoptees gain access to what is rightfully theirs."

This new action permits more swapping of information between biological parents and adoptees. It expands on the Illinois Birth Certificate Law, enacted in 2010, which gave adopted adults access to their original birth certificates without obtaining a court order.

Together, both bills have put Illinois at the forefront of a nation-wide movement for more transparency surrounding adoption, which, in earlier generations, was always shrouded in secrecy. One out of every six Americans is connected to adoption in some way — as either a birth or adoptee grandparent, parent, sibling or child, according to the Donaldson Institute, an adoption research organization. In Illinois alone, nearly 17,000 children have been adopted during the last decade, reports the Department of Children and Family Services.

Quinn signed the bill on the Steve Cochran show because the radio host is an adoptee and has been a high-profile supporter of the need for more open records. Since 2010, more than 10,000 adoptees have gained access to these documents, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Other guests included State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), the bill's sponsor, and also an adoptee, State Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago), who is adopted but whose birth certificate is still unobtainable because she was born in Pennsylvania.

Also on hand was Jean Strauss, a filmmaker who is premiering the documentary "A Simple Piece of Paper" about Illinois-born adoptees who were affected by the change in law. The film will be shown tonight at 3656 N. Halsted at the Center on Halsted at 7:15 p.m.

[brubin@tribune.com](mailto:brubin@tribune.com)

*Twitter: @bmrubin*

Copyright © 2014 Chicago Tribune Company, LLC

---