

September 29, 2005

Office of Senator Herb Kohl
ATTEN: DISTRICT SCHEDULER
310 West Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53203

Re: Protecting the Privacy Rights of Individuals Affected by Adoption

Dear State Representative:

Although I am not one of your constituents, I believe your state has jurisdiction of my issue as my adoption took place in Illinois in 1968. I wanted to share an experience with you in hopes that you can help protect the privacy rights of other individuals who may currently or someday be in my position. In light of the 100,000¹ adoptions that took place annually in the 90's, 500,000 people (1 adoptee, 2 birthparents and 2 adoptive parents) have the potential to be affected, sometimes detrimentally, by the open record laws and abilities of people to search out birth-families. The searches conducted and privacy intrusion by individuals and other third party agencies can have horrible consequences far more devastating than the adoption itself (however, bear in mind that not all adoptees feel a 'hole' in their lives or feel any stigma). We have been able to protect people from the invasion of telemarketers during dinnertime – please help in preventing an intrusion far more personal.

I was adopted in 1968 through DCFS of Rockford, IL when I was 6 weeks old. My birthmother hunted me down with the aid of MidWest Adoption Services (Springfield, IL) in 2000 when I was 32 years old. It has been a horrible experience which I have come to rue time and time again. My birthmother has turned our world upside down. Due to the thousands of adoptions performed annually, I know I am not alone in this situation. Please help me in closing this legal loophole allowing for intrusion on a state level, if not federal level due to the jurisdictional issues as well as the core issue of privacy rights.

Allowing records to be opened by another party, or searches by birth-families and adoptees, is an intrusion into people's lives. There are registries available for birth-families and adoptees who wish to be contacted that allow for the exchange of this information and as such, there is no reason to allow records to be opened or investigated by third parties. The registries show a mutual interest; opening records does not - it is an intrusion. If someone is not on the registry, then one should not be able to circumvent their wishes and open records or go to an independent third party. My REAL parents were safe with the thought that the records could not be opened. They would roll over in their graves if they knew what happened. When birthparents terminate their rights, they should not be able to renege on it 30 years later just to heal their own hearts and guilt while causing an upheaval in others' lives. We've got to do all we can to maintain the privacy of adoptees and birthparents alike. Please

help me in doing so. Even if the hunted party declines any further contact, the damage has already been done. Having a mediator send a letter does not matter – the shock, pain and anger still exists.

I strongly urge you to reconsider any legislation allowing for open records and to keep all adoption records and original birth certificates sealed. No agency or third party should be allowed to open these records. At the very least, if you insist on allowing these intrusions to occur, background checks and counseling should be mandatory. Based on my own personal experience and reading of others' journals on line, I am not the only one affected by these personal intrusions. Please, I urge you, do not allow these records to be opened and used to open or create wounds.

Please take a moment to discuss this issue with me. We have come to respect our privacy here in America and I ask that you seek to ensure that we, as adoptees, real (adopted) parents and birthparents, can sleep comfortably knowing that we won't get the letter, phone call or visit that will turn our worlds upside down. If someone wants to initiate contact, they can do so through the numerous registries available but please protect the privacy of those who do not wish to have contact. This bill denying 3rd parties and individuals from invading our privacy does not prevent two parties who wish to make contact – they will still have the option of using the numerous adoption registries available. It merely protects all parties to ensure they are amiable to contact prior to the devastation of intrusion.

How can it hurt to open up a national “please call me” list (vs a “do not call” list established to stomp out invading telemarketers) vs. the opening of records or investigations that could cause harm? A national “please contact me” list will reduce the exorbitant prices charged by investigators and give an immediate response for all involved. Everyone can benefit from this type of list. Those who want to be contacted, can be; those who don't, won't. Please help me and others in my situation to stop the invasion and detrimental effects caused by unwanted contact.

Help those who want contact by establishing a national “please do call” list while protecting the privacy rights of others who do not register on this list.

Sincerely,

Alisa A. Alfaro

Registered Voter

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