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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE (Letters)

Adoptees are a largely ignored minority

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Cary

Thank you for the article "Study: Let adoptees see files; Report urges access to birth certificates, adoption court files" (Page 1, Nov. 12). The Donaldson study demonstrates why adult adoptees deserve access to their records. Current adoption law criminalizes adoptees without cause. Unlike any other segment of the American population, adult adoptees are assumed incapable of responsibly managing their own lives. There is a difference between knowing information and acting on it, and there are existing laws to prevent harassment. Adoptees seek only the same unrestricted access to their records as every other U.S. citizen.

Adoptees are a largely ignored minority. Our birth certificates are legally falsified by the state, the trail to our medical history and heritage deliberately blurred. We are forced to face indifferent clerks, unsympathetic courts and a misinformed public.

Though we may be able to drive, vote, drink and be drafted, we are rendered perpetual children in the eyes of the law.

Can you imagine the humiliation of being told you are not worthy to know your own name? No American adult should have to go through a third party to obtain his or her birthright.

Worse, these laws have less to do with "protecting" families than with maintaining questionable adoption practices.

Sealed records only encourage illegal and quasi-legal practices. Protecting the small number of birth relatives who do not wish contact, and who are safeguarded by existing laws, is no reason to remove the rights of others. As the Donaldson study shows, adoptees are as capable of acting like adults as anyone.

Registries and intermediaries like those used in Illinois are not an effective solution. There is no such thing as a "standard" adoption, so many cases fall through the cracks. Interstate and international adoptions render registries and intermediaries largely useless.

As an adult adoptee, I was denied access to Illinois' services for years, simply for having the bad luck to be born here but adopted out of state.

Adoptees should be allowed to assume the mantle of adults in our society. I encourage Illinois lawmakers to grant adult adoptees full access to their records.

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