



# ***New Jersey Coalition for Adoption Reform & Education***

*NJCARE: A grassroots organization that supports honesty in adoption through educational outreach and legislative advocacy*

*Legislative Office: 29 Hill Street, Morristown, NJ 07960 201.400.6714 njcare.staff@gmail.com*

## **For Immediate Release**

For further information, contact: Pam Hasegawa 201-400.6714 or Judy Foster 973.455.1268

**June 24, 2011**

### **Governor Christie conditionally vetoes Adoptees' Birthright Bill**

*Morristown, NJ, June 24<sup>rd</sup>, 2011* – NJCARE and the nationwide adoption community are shocked and dismayed that Governor Christie conditionally vetoed the Adoptee's Birthright Bill, S799 on Thursday. S799 would have allowed adult adoptees to receive a copy of their original birth certificates upon request. It would have offered past relinquishing parents a full year following enactment to request removal of their name and address from the copy of the original birth certificate released to the requesting party. Governor Christie has chosen instead to turn his back on the rights of New Jersey adopted citizens.

While overwhelming evidence supports the changes adopted by the Legislature in S799, Governor Christie's conditional veto reflects special interests of NJ institutions opposing the bill including ACLU, Catholic Conference of Bishops, Right-to-Life, and the State Bar Association. This unlikely alliance pursues an agenda of secrecy in adoption. Their desire to ensure that adoption is practiced in a clandestine manner flies in the face of decades of research that promotes openness in adoption as the healthiest outcome for everyone involved. Similarly, their desire to keep family members hidden from each other blocks timely access to potentially life-saving health history.

Although he calls it a "conditional veto," the Governor's "conditions" strongly resemble a different bill which the Legislature did *not* enact. In order for adopted adults to obtain their own birth certificates, the governor would require them to hire a confidential intermediary to locate and gain permission from the birth parent. If permission is refused, updated family health history will be requested, but not required. Additionally, future relinquishing parents could block future adoptees' access to their original birth certificates. The governor's "conditions" deny the human and civil rights of adults to know the truth of their identity at birth.

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The effort to restore adult adoptees' right to access their original birth certificates is gaining support throughout the nation. Alaska and Kansas have never sealed original birth certificates from adopted adults. New Hampshire, Maine, Oregon, and Alabama have allowed no-strings access over the past decade, while about a dozen states allow degrees of access based on the adoptee's year of birth. The statistics in states allowing access refute predictions of negative consequences voiced by opponents in NJ.

The Adoptee's Birthright Bill sought to ensure truth and integrity in adoption by restoring equality and civil rights to the adult adoptee. The lives and well being of thousands of adoptees and their families would have been greatly enhanced had it been signed by the governor. Sadly, these persons will continue to live with the veil of state-sanctioned secrecy obscuring the truth of their identities.

Prime sponsors of S799/S1399/A1406 are Senators Joe Vitale (D-Middlesex), Diane Allen (R-Burlington/Camden), Loretta Weinberg (Bergen), Assemblymen Vincent Prieto (D-Hudson), John Bramnick (R-Union), Charles Mainor (D-Essex), and Assemblywomen Joan Voss (D-Bergen) and Grace Spencer (D-Essex).

All persons should have a right to their original birth certificate. The adoption community in New Jersey looked to Governor Christie to see this basic truth and to support the civil and human rights of the adopted adult. Deplorably, this did not occur.

For more information, go to [www.nj-care.org](http://www.nj-care.org) and follow us on FaceBook (NJCARE)