




JAN 03 2011

Senate of Pennsylvania

January 3, 2011

TO: All Senators
FROM: Senator Robert D. Robbins 
SUBJECT: Invitation for Co-Sponsorship
Amend the Vital Statistics Law of 1953

I will soon be re-introducing legislation that will amend Act 66 of 1953 (known as the Vital Statistics Law). (Senate Bill 683 of last session).

Currently, Pennsylvania statute prohibits the release of confidential vital records to the public, regardless of the age of the records. Prior to 1906, birth and death records were recorded at the county level, considered public records and are available to researchers. Beginning in 1906, Pennsylvania began to register birth and death records on a statewide basis and restricted their access to immediate family members only.

My bill is similar to SB 683 of last session, except I have made a two changes. The bill I will be introducing would amend the Vital Statistics Law to allow all applications for Birth Records, 100 years and older, and Death Records 50 years and older, to become public records. This change will allow greater access to family historians and genealogists. In addition my legislation would require that the original birth and death records that become open records shall be maintained by the Pennsylvania State Archives. Currently all birth and death records are maintained by the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the Department of Health.

This legislation will in no way affects the current fees to obtain certified copies of birth and death records as established by statute.

Previous co-sponsors included, Senators Alloway, Baker, Dinniman, Earll, Erickson, Ferlo, Folmer, Gordner, Kasunic, Piccola, Pileggi, Rafferty, Stout, Ward, M. White, and Yaw.

Please join me in cosponsoring this legislation by calling my office at 787-1322 or emailing Michael Hengst of my staff at mhengst@pasen.gov.