



Obama's birth certificate: Final chapter. This time we mean it!

By [Robert Farley](#) on Wednesday, July 1st, 2009 at 7:12 p.m.

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Back on June 27, 2008, PolitiFact published a story we hoped would put the whole Obama birth certificate controversy to rest. It ran under the now-laughable headline, "[Obama's birth certificate: Final chapter.](#)"

Oh, how naive we were.

More than a year later, the debate continues to rage on the Internet among the "Birthers" movement, people who doubt that President Barack Obama is a natural-born citizen of the United States and is therefore ineligible to serve as president. Or at least, they say, Obama has yet to sufficiently prove things one way or the other.

The conservative WorldNetDaily.com Web site is the conductor of the Birther train. On the site, you can donate money to rent billboard space that asks "Where's the Birth Certificate?" They've got a petition demanding the president produce his original birth certificate — now signed, they say, by 400,000 people. From the site, you can buy "Where's the Birth Certificate?" yard signs and bumper stickers. The site has recently run stories about a man whose attempts to sell a purported Obama birth certificate from Kenya on eBay have been repeatedly shut down.

And on May 28, WorldNetDaily.com correspondent Lester Kinsolving pressed the issue all the way to the White House, squeezing in a couple questions at the end of [a daily press briefing](#) with White House spokesman Robert Gibbs.

Here's how the exchange went:

Kinsolving: "One question concerning what the president said in his speech on Thursday,

and I quote, 'I ran for president promising transparency, and I meant what I said. This is why, whenever possible, we will make information available to the American people so they can make informed judgments and hold us accountable.' End of quote. Do you remember that statement?"

Gibbs: "I can confirm he said that."

Kinsolving: "Good. In consideration of this very good promise of transparency, why can't the president respond to the petitioned requests of 400,000 American citizens by releasing a certified copy of his long form birth certificate listing hospital and physician?"

Gibbs: "Are you looking for the president's birth certificate?"

Kinsolving: "Yes."

Gibbs: "It's on the Internet, Lester."

Kinsolving: "No, no, no — the long form listing his hospital and physician."

Gibbs: "Lester ... This question in many ways continues to astound me. The state of Hawaii provided a copy, with a seal, of the president's birth. I know there are apparently at least 400,000 people that continue to doubt the existence of and the certification by the state of Hawaii of the president's birth there, but it's on the Internet because we put it on the Internet for each of those 400,000 to download. I certainly hope by the fourth year of our administration that we'll have dealt with this burgeoning birth controversy."

WorldNetDaily.com, through an owner, the Western Center for Journalism, responded with an ad in the conservative publication *Human Events* that called Gibbs' response arrogant, factually incorrect, lies.

Moreover, the ad said, "members of the liberal elitist media ... instead of pressing Gibbs on his outrageous statements ... openly laughed."

The ad is right about that; journalists could clearly be heard chuckling at Kinsolving's questions.

The question here is, did Gibbs lie?

Some background: On June 13, 2008, after months of hounding by the media and wild Internet speculation that Obama was actually born in either Indonesia or Kenya, the Obama campaign finally released a copy of Obama's "Certification of Birth" from Hawaii and posted it on the Internet. The document states that Barack Hussein Obama II was born on Aug. 4, 1961, at 7:24 p.m. in Honolulu, Hawaii, to parents Stanley Ann Dunham and Barack Hussein Obama.

End of story? Hardly. If anything, it merely intensified the debate. Numerous critics arose on the Internet claiming the document was a fraud. It was the wrong color. It was missing an embossed seal. There was no crease from it being folded and mailed.

Our friends from FactCheck.org went to Chicago, held the document in their questioning hands and examined it closely. Their conclusion: It's legit.

On Oct. 31, 2008, Dr. Chiyome Fukino, director of the Hawaii Department of Health, issued this statement: "There have been numerous requests for Sen. Barack Hussein Obama's official birth certificate. State law prohibits the release of a certified birth certificate to persons who do not have a tangible interest in the vital record.

"Therefore I, as director of health for the state of Hawaii, along with the registrar of Vital Statistics who has statutory authority to oversee and maintain these type of vital records, have personally seen and verified that the Hawaii State Department of Health has Sen. Obama's original birth certificate on record in accordance with state policies and procedures.

"No state official, including Gov. Linda Lingle, has ever instructed that this vital record be handled in a manner different from any other vital record in the possession of the state of Hawaii."

Even the governor of Hawaii, Linda Lingle, a Republican who at the time was stumping for John McCain, said it was on the up-and-up.

Over? No way.

All that proved, the birthers concluded, was that there is, in fact, an original birth certificate, and that the public hasn't seen it. The new argument goes like this: Obama never published his "Birth Certificate" (a "Certificate of Live Birth") on the Internet; what he posted was a

"Certification of Live Birth," what WorldNetDaily describes as "a 'short-form' document that is generated on-the-spot and based on what is contained in a computer database at the time it was printed out."

Some on the Internet speculate that the original "long form" — which might include the hospital where he was born as well as the attending physician — might show Obama was foreign-born and ineligible to be president, but that that wouldn't show up on the "short form."

Moreover, WorldNetDaily claims even the state of Hawaii doesn't accept "Certification of Live Birth" as proof that an individual was physically born in Hawaii.

They point to a policy from the Hawaii Department of Home Lands, which stated on its Web site:

"In order to process your application, DHHL utilizes information that is found only on the original Certificate of Live Birth, which is either black or green. This is a more complete record of your birth than the Certification of Live Birth (a computer-generated printout). Submitting the original Certificate of Live Birth will save you time and money since the computer-generated Certification requires additional verification by DHHL."

That's actually a misnomer, said Lloyd Yonenaka, a spokesman for DHLL. In order to be eligible for their program, you must prove that your ancestry is at least 50 percent native Hawaiian. And when he says native, he means indigenous. They don't even care if you were born in Hawaii. They use birth certificates as a starting point to look into a person's ancestry. Very different.

Here's what the DHLL site says now: "The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands accepts both Certificates of Live Birth (original birth certificate) and Certifications of Live Birth because they are official government records documenting an individual's birth. The Certificate of Live Birth generally has more information which is useful for genealogical purposes as compared to the Certification of Live Birth which is a computer-generated printout that provides specific details of a person's birth. Although original birth certificates (Certificates of Live Birth) are preferred for their greater detail, the State Department of Health (DOH) no longer issues Certificates of Live Birth. When a request is made for a copy of a birth certificate, the DOH issues a Certification of Live Birth."

When we spoke to a spokeswoman for the Hawaii Department of Health, she said too much was being made of the difference between the so-called "long" and "short" forms.

"They're just words," said spokeswoman Janice Okubo. "That (what was posted on the Internet) is considered a birth certificate from the state of Hawaii."

"There's only one form of birth certificate," she said, and it's been the same since the 1980s. Birth certificates evolve over the decades, she said, and there are no doubt differences between the way birth certificates looked when Obama was born and now.

"When you request a birth certificate, the one you get looks exactly like the one posted on his site," she said. "That's the birth certificate."

As for the theory that Obama's original birth certificate might show he was foreign-born, Okubo said the "Certification of Live Birth" would say so. Obama's does not. Again, it says he was born in Honolulu.

We have one more thing. We talked to reporter Will Hoover, who wrote a well-researched story for the *Honolulu Advertiser* on Nov. 9, 2008, about Obama's childhood years in the Aloha State. It ran under the headline "Obama Slept Here."

In researching the story, he went to the microfilm archives and found the birth announcement for Obama. Actually, he found two of them, one in his [Honolulu Advertiser on Aug. 13](#), 1961, and in the [Honolulu Star-Bulletin the next day](#). They both said the same thing: "Mr. and Mrs. Barack H. Obama, 6085 Kalaniana'ole Highway, son, Aug. 4."

But here's the thing. Newspaper officials he checked with confirmed those notices came from the state Department of Health.

"That's not the kind of stuff a family member calls in and says, 'Hey, can you put this in?'" Hoover explained.

Take a second and think about that. In order to phony those notices up, it would have required the complicity of the state Health Department and two independent newspapers — on the off chance this unnamed child might one day be president of the United States.

In Honolulu, the Obama tour buses take you by the old Kapiolani Maternity and Gynecological Hospital, now called Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children. Federal laws prohibit hospital officials from confirming that he was born there, but Hoover said it's common knowledge among locals.

So back to the claim that Gibbs lied about posting Obama's birth certificate on the Internet. WorldNetDaily is correct that the Obama campaign didn't post his original birth certificate on the Internet. But their suggestion that there is some significant difference between the two documents is wrong. They both prove the same thing. Maybe the original would identify the hospital where Obama was born, but that's irrelevant. The issue is what city, and therefore country, was he born. The document posted by the campaign proves Obama was born in Honolulu, according to Health Department officials. And that's really the central issue here.

The Health Department says the "Certification of Live Birth" is Hawaii's version of a birth certificate. Calling it by other names — Certificate of Live Birth, Certification of Live Birth — is just semantics. WorldNetDaily may be right that the original birth certificate wasn't posted, but if Hawaii says the the document Obama posted can rightly be called Obama's birth certificate, how is Gibbs lying? We harbor no delusions that anything we say here will slow the persistent drumbeat of the birthers, but we rule this statement False.

We also examined a related claim about a bill pending in Congress:

[See related rulings](#) ▼

Who knows where some political ideas originate.

Any anonymous person can post a statement on the Internet. It can be passed around, repeated, added to and commented on in blog after blog. It can be circulated in chain e-mails. And pretty soon it gathers such steam, its very reach seems to add credibility.

Here, we deal with just such an idea. It's the claim that the Free Flow of Information Act of 2009 passed by the House in March is actually a "stealth" law aimed at protecting President Barack Obama from having to produce his "actual" birth certificate. That's why some conservative bloggers derisively call it the "Obama Birth Certificate Protection Act."

Readers sent us an e-mail that claimed the bill "would guarantee Barack Obama will never be held accountable for producing forged birth documents." Most versions call for readers to contact their local legislator to oppose the bill, which has been introduced in the Senate.

As for the claim that Obama produced "forged" birth documents, that's a matter we have been following for quite some time, and we direct your attention [here](#) .

In this item, we wanted to set the record straight about the Free Flow of Information Act. Passed by the House in March, the bill is designed to protect journalists from having to reveal confidential sources in federal court.

Here's what the bill says: "A federal entity may not compel a covered person to provide testimony or produce any document related to information obtained or created by such covered person as part of engaging in journalism, unless a court determines by a preponderance of the evidence." You can read the bill in its entirety [here](#) .

Many bloggers insist it would also protect federal employees of the executive branch from being compelled to release documents.

But the key words are "covered person." And this is how it's defined later in the bill: "The term 'covered person' means a person who regularly gathers, prepares, collects, photographs, records, writes, edits, reports, or publishes news or information that concerns local, national, or international events or other matters of public interest for dissemination to the public for a substantial portion of the person's livelihood or for substantial financial gain and includes a supervisor, employer, parent, subsidiary, or affiliate of such covered person."

In other words, "a covered person is simply a journalist," said Sophia Cope, legislative counsel for the Newspaper Association of America, which has lobbied hard for the bill. "The White House would not fall under that."

This bill has been kicking around Congress for four years, long before Obama announced his candidacy for president. The idea that it is a covert attempt to block Obama from producing his birth certificate is absurd. We also note that the bill has enjoyed widespread bipartisan support. It was so noncontroversial it passed the House on March 31 with a voice vote rather than a roll call. Last Congress, it passed by a vote of 398-21. A Senate version of the bill is under consideration.

Cope isn't quite sure how the intent of the law has been so grossly distorted.

"The bill's intent is to protect reporters and their confidential sources from being subpoenaed to testify, or from having to disclose the identity of those sources," Cope said. "I don't see how it would relate to Obama's birth certificate."

One could argue that this law has simply been misread by some well-intentioned government watchdogs. But this is just the latest conspiracy theory from the fringe of a conservative group convinced that Obama hasn't provided sufficient documentation to prove he was born in the United States, and therefore cannot serve as president. Even among these folks, the claim about the Free Flow of Information Act is more than a stretch. We give it a **Pants on Fire**.



About this article

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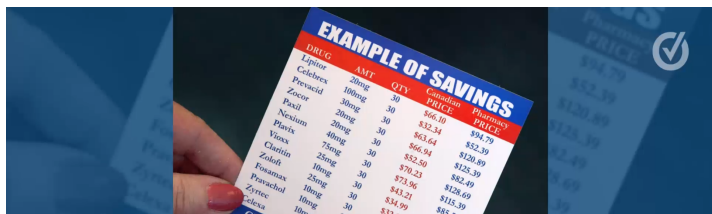
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