

Rep. Peter Welch today cosponsored legislation to curb the growing practice of employers requiring prospective or current employees, as a condition of employment, to provide access to password-protected social media accounts like Facebook and Twitter.

The Password Protection Act of 2012 (H.R. 5684) would prohibit compelling or coercing employees to provide access to data stored in private accounts.

“Employees have a legitimate expectation of privacy when using Facebook or Twitter. This legislation will prevent fishing expeditions into employees’ private lives,” Welch said. “While an employer may have a valid concern about the business impact of an employee’s online activity, demanding passwords and unfettered access to private accounts is an over-the-top solution.”

Recent news reports have highlighted a disturbing increase in the number of employers asking prospective employees to reveal usernames and passwords to social media accounts like Facebook. Some employers are demanding applicants, *during job interviews*, log into their accounts and allow the interviewer to browse their profile, acquaintances, and other information. Others are requiring passwords on job applications.

Welch has been a leader in Congress on the need to update privacy laws to keep pace with changing technologies. With mobile telephones and other devices making it easier to use GPS technology to track the location of individuals, [Welch last July introduced bipartisan legislation](#) to set clear guidelines on when and how this information can be accessed by law enforcement.