

EMPLOYERS IN MARYLAND AND SOCIAL MEDIA PRIVACY



A new legislation has been adopted by the Maryland General Assembly. This legislation would actually make it so that employers in the state of Maryland could not ask a potential candidate for employment for their social media website account information. This would include the passwords and e-mail addresses used for some of the most popular social networking websites, such as Twitter and Facebook. If the law is signed by the Governor, Martin O' Malley, it will be in effect by the 1st of October in 2012. Basically, the primary rule would be that the employers based in Maryland could not threaten employees or fire them due to their refusal of providing access to their social media accounts, as this is a complete lack of privacy and is simply unjust. In the past, some employers have asked employees for permission to access their personal accounts and in some instances, when an employee refused, they would punish the employee by firing them. This law would make it so that the employers could not fire the employee, whether they want to share access to their accounts or not. Employers will also not be allowed to refuse to hire an individual who is not willing to provide passwords for their social media accounts. In March of this year, Facebook often urged its users not to share their private information for their social media account with any potential employees. Facebook says that they work hard to protect user's privacy and to keep their pictures and posts private, only seen by those who the user wants to see it. Facebook even urged people who have been asked to share their password with employers to seek legal action about the situation. If an employer does have access to a social media account of their employee, they actually end up being more liable, which is definitely not a good thing because then an employee can easily say that the employer did not hire them or fired them based on their race, their sexual preference, marital status, or other similar characteristic. Of course, employers are concerned about whom they hire but there are other ways to find out about people aside from going on their personal accounts and basically snooping around in their business. While no one knows whether the Governor will sign the legislation, many employees are hoping that he will. And, if he does, employers will have to work on other hiring processes, aside from going on potential employees social networking websites to find out more about the person. An employment application and a background check should be enough for an employer who is looking for the right match for his or her company.