

Under Attack: Employer Access to Social Media Accounts of Employees and Applicants, in *Thomson Reuters News & Insight*

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David Garland, a Member of the Labor and Employment practice, in the New York and Newark offices, and **Andrea Calem**, a Senior Attorney in the Labor and Employment practice, in the Washington, DC, office, wrote an article titled "Under Attack: Employer Access to Social Media Accounts of Employees and Applicants."

Following is an excerpt:

- Since 2006, the McLean County, Illinois sheriff's office has asked applicants to sign into Facebook during interviews so their accounts can be screened.
- In Spotsylvania County, Virginia, the sheriff's department asks applicants for law enforcement positions to "friend" its background investigators.
- The city of Bozeman, Mont., had a policy of asking job applicants for passwords to their email addresses, social networking websites and other online accounts until, facing a public outcry, it rescinded the policy in June 2009.

These public sector employers had the public safety and welfare in mind when they sought access to an applicant's social media accounts; the hiring of a dangerous or untruthful individual in a public safety position can have dire consequences. There are also valid, business-related reasons for private-sector employers to seek access to an applicant's online accounts, particularly social networking sites: verification of information, safeguarding or taking action against defamatory statements, and preventing conflicts of interest.

People



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