



SEN. GINNY BURDICK
SEN. BRUCE STARR
REP. MARGARET DOHERTY

NEWS RELEASE

April 22, 2013

CONTACT: Jeff Fisher 503-986-1718

Senate Passes Bipartisan Social Media Privacy Bill

SB 344A prohibits higher education institutions from demanding access to social media accounts

SALEM – The Oregon Senate today passed a bipartisan bill designed to protect the privacy rights of college students. SB 344A focuses on privacy protection for higher education candidates and current students by prohibiting a university or college from demanding access to a private social media page, such as Facebook. The bill passed on a unanimous vote.

“This bill would resolve a serious privacy issue stemming from the rise in popularity of social media,” said Senator Ginny Burdick (D-Portland), author of the bill. “If a student chooses to keep his or her personal social networking page private, it is not acceptable for a college or university to demand access as a condition of admission. SB 344A strikes a good balance between student privacy and the legitimate information needs of colleges and universities.”

Under SB 344A, colleges and universities can still conduct an investigation and compel a student to share specific information when there is a report of illegal activity.

“An individual has a clear right to a private life, free from unwanted invasion,” said Senator Bruce Starr (R-Hillsboro), who introduced a similar piece of legislation. “This bill helps bold some important lines that have become blurry with the advent of social media. Students should be able to expect privacy in the digital records of their life, like Facebook and Twitter.”

“Neither being a student, nor going online should sacrifice a person’s right to privacy,” said Representative Margaret Doherty (D-Tigard). “I’m glad that the Senate has acted to protect students’ personal information, and I look forward to working on this issue in the House.”

Rep. Doherty is the chief sponsor of HB 2654 which addresses the issue of employer access to social media passwords. The bill recently passed unanimously in the House and currently awaits action in the Senate Committee on General Government, Consumer and Small Business Protection. Senator Burdick and Senator Starr both have signed on as sponsors of the bill.

SB 344A now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###