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# Client Alert

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## Why Can't We Be Friends? New Missouri Law Bans Teacher-Student Friendships on Facebook

In light of the pervasive use of social media among students, many teachers view Facebook, Twitter and other popular websites as additional avenues for engaging and educating students. A new Missouri law, however, may severely inhibit these instructors' use of social media or remove it altogether from their teaching toolbox.

Senate Bill 54, which is scheduled to become law later this month, requires that every school district develop a written policy concerning teacher-student communications by January 1, 2012. Among other things, the policy must address "appropriate use of electronic media... including social networking sites." In addition, teachers are prohibited from establishing, maintaining or using work-related websites unless the websites are available to school administrators and the student's custodian or guardian. Teachers are expressly forbidden from having a non-work-related website that allows exclusive access with a current or former student. Former students include "any person who was at one time a student at the school at which the teacher is employed and who is eighteen years of age or less and who has not graduated."

Whether you agree or disagree with this new law, it is a clear sign that the Missouri legislature, like those in other states, is ready and willing to regulate the use of social media. While this current law is directed towards the teacher/student relationship, one can easily envision the legislature enacting similar laws in contexts that could directly affect your business. Members of our Social Media practice group are closely following developments in statutory and case law so that they can assist you and your employees in navigating the legal pitfalls associated with the use of these popular websites.

For further information, please contact one of the following members of Armstrong Teasdale's Social Media group:

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