Peter Welch was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1947 into a family of six children. He attended Holy Name Grammar School and Cathedral High School. After graduating from Holy Cross College in 1969, he was selected to be in the first class of Robert F. Kennedy Fellows. This honor allowed him to continue the civil rights work he began in college, helping families in Chicago overcome discriminatory housing policies. Welch graduated from the University of California Berkeley, Boalt Hall in 1973.

Settling in Vermont, Welch worked as a public defender and subsequently founded the law firm of Welch, Graham & Manby.

In 1980, Welch became only the second Democrat ever elected to represent Windsor County in the Vermont State Senate. In 1985 he was elected by his colleagues to serve as President Pro Tem of the Vermont Senate, becoming the first Democrat in Vermont history to hold this leadership position. Welch returned to the Senate in 2002 and his colleagues again elected him President Pro Tem in 2003, a position he held until 2006.

[illegible] Biography.