

Legislative Social Media Policies and Resources

State legislative caucuses and agencies increasingly are using social networking sites to reach out to constituents, but the sites can raise questions for government. For example, citizens may not be aware that privacy policies and terms of service agreements of social networking sites could conflict with government policies and statutes. Many social networking sites contain advertisements; for governments with social networking pages, do the ads imply endorsement of products shown? How should government officials and employees handle offensive or obscene content posted by users? Can elected officials block followers and friends? How are Internet campaigning laws and rules being applied to social media? And how do public records and open meetings laws intersect with social networking? [Legislative speech and debate immunity](#) also may enter the mix.

In addition, social media use in the workplace is widespread, but concerns remain—about employee productivity, [employee privacy](#), threats from viruses or spyware spread through social media sites, and other potential abuses or liabilities.

This site provides various resources and examples of policies, including NCSL's [A Guide for Writing a State Legislative Personnel Manual](#), which has useful guidance (under "Workplace Conduct" sections) relating to the use of technology resources, personal devices and the use of social media.

The policies and resources provided below are examples of some of the approaches state legislatures and other organizations are taking to address these issues. Share your information on this site by [sending](#) your policies and practices.

Legislative Policies

Legislatures adopt social media policies to set ground rules related to site administration, appropriate content (including comments), and employee usage. The following are meant only as examples of policies from various points in time.

Usage Policies

- [Alaska Legislature Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [California Senate Social Media Policy](#)
- [Delaware House of Representatives Social Media Policy](#)
- [Hawaii Senate Social Media Policy](#)
- [Hawaii Senate Twitter Usage Policy](#)
- [Hawaii House of Representatives Social Media Proper Use Policy](#)
- [Hawaii House of Representatives Request to Add Social Media Links](#)
- [Texas Legislative Reference Library Social Media Policy](#)
- Washington [Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee Social Media Policies](#)
- [Washington State Senate Social Media Policy](#)
- [West Virginia Legislature Social Media Policy](#) (see p. 29)
- [Wisconsin Assembly Guidelines Regarding Legislator and Staff Use of State-Supported Websites and Social Media](#) (see p. 13)

Site Policies or Disclaimers

- [Arizona House of Representatives Caucus Website Policy](#)
- [New York Senate Terms of Participation](#)

State (Executive Branch)

Social media is a useful tool for a state agency that wants to inform a wide audience about its mission and programs. But an agency also needs an effective policy that clarifies who is permitted to post on its behalf, as well as what sort of internal use is appropriate.

Examples of Executive Branch/State Agency Social Media Policies

- [Delaware State Government Social Media Policy](#)
- [Policy on Personal Use of Social Media](#), Bureau of Human Resources, Maine
- [Social Media Legal Guidance Toolkit](#), Executive Office of Technology Services and Security, Massachusetts
- [Michigan Social Media Policies](#)
- [Social Media Policy, New York CIO/New York State Office for Technology](#). August 14, 2018.
- [Best Practices for State Agency Social Media Usage in North Carolina](#), North Carolina Office of the Governor, North Carolina Office of Information Technology Services, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Sept. 2017
- [Social Media Policy of the South Dakota Secretary of State](#), February 2011
- [Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media](#), Department of Human Resources Management, Commonwealth of Virginia, March 2011

Other State Resources

- [Examining State Social Media Policies: Closing the Gaps](#), NASCIO, June 2013
- [Friends, Followers, and Feeds: A National Survey of Social Media Use in State Government](#), National Association of State Chief Information Officers, September 2010

Federal Resources

Resources in this section range from congressional and federal agency policies in effect to studies of best practices.

- [Social Media in the House of Representatives: Frequently Asked Questions](#), Congressional Research Service, 2016
- U.S. House Committee on Administration, [Members Handbook](#) (see e.g., section on "[Websites](#)")
- [U.S. Senate Internet Services and Technology Resources Usage Rules](#)
- [A Report on Federal Web 2.0 Use and Record Value 2010: A Study Prepared by the National Archives and Records Administration National Records Management Program](#), Sept. 16, 2010
- [Centers for Disease Control Social Media Tools Guidelines and Best Practices](#)
- [Guidelines for Secure Use of Social Media by Federal Departments and Agencies, v1.0](#), Federal Chief Information Officers Council, September 2009
- [Social Media Subcouncil: Web 2.0 Governance Policies and Best Practices](#), [Social Media Subcouncil](#)

NCSL Resources

NCSL publications have addressed ethical issues particular to social media, as well as other considerations for elected officials.

- [A Guide for Writing a State Legislative Personnel Manual](#), NCSL, July 2020 (see section on Workplace Conduct: Use of Social Media")
- [What Can You Do About Social Media Trolls?](#), State Legislatures magazine, March/April 2019
- [Today's Social Media Can Cause Blurry Lines](#), NCSL Blog, September 26, 2017
- [Blocking and Banning Followers and Friends](#), NCSL Blog, August 21, 2017
- [You're an Ethical Social Media User, Right?](#), State Legislatures magazine, May 2017
- [Something to Like](#), State Legislatures magazine, April 2014
- [Social Media Policies](#) (NCSL Webinar), April 27, 2012
- [Legislative Social Media Sites](#)

Other Resources

Additional guidance on crafting and implementing an effective social media policy is available from sources ranging from technology companies to think tanks.

- [Establishing Effective Social Media Policies for Your Agency](#), Municipal Research and Services Center, February 24, 2015
- [Facebook Guide for State Legislators](#), August 2017
- [Are State Ethics Rules Keeping Up with Social Media?](#) Governing magazine, May 2017
- [Designing Social Media Policy for Government](#), Brookings Institution, January 2011
- [Designing Social Media Policy for Government: Eight Essential Elements](#), Center for Technology in Government, May 2010