Alaska Legislature Social Media Guidelines

These are the official guidelines for the use of social media at the Alaska State Legislature. We expect all who participate in social media on behalf of the Legislature, or a legislative office, to understand and to follow these guidelines. If you are posting on behalf of your Legislator, be sure you are authorized to do so, and make sure that what you post will not embarrass yourself or the office you represent.

When Publishing

Emerging platforms for online collaboration are fundamentally changing the way we work, offering new ways to engage with constituents and the world at large. It's a new model for interaction and we believe social computing can help you to build stronger, more successful relationships with coworkers, constituents and the general public.

If you or someone in your office participates in social media, please follow these guiding principles:

- Know and follow the Alaska State Legislature's Computer Acceptable Use Policy, Ethics Policy, and any other policies which concern appropriate behavior within the Legislature.
- Respect proprietary information, content and confidentiality.
- Always stop and pause, thinking before posting. Reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
- Post meaningful, respectful comments—in other words, no spam and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive. Do not use inappropriate language.
- When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.
- Stay within your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on your topic.
- Last, but not least, do not use these sites or programs for personal benefit.

Specific Guidelines

Transparency. Your honesty (or dishonesty) will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If you are blogging about your work, use your real name, and organization, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, point it out. Transparency is about your identity and relationships.

Be careful. Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully.

Write what you know. Make sure you write and post about your areas of expertise.

Perception is reality. In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a State employee or elected official, you are creating perceptions about your expertise. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the Legislature's professional standards.

Are you providing information? There are millions of words out there. The best way to get yours read is to write things that people will value. Social communication should add value. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or solve problems—then it's adding value.

Act Responsibly: What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social computing is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. Please know and follow these guidelines as well as the Alaska Legislature's Computer Acceptable Use Policy, as well as our Ethics Policy.

Correct errors quickly. If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction. If you're posting to a blog, and choose to modify an earlier post—make it clear that you have done so.

If it gives you pause, then stop. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't shrug it off and hit 'send.' Take a minute to review the material, try to figure out what's bothering you, and then fix it. If you're still unsure, you might want to discuss it with your Supervisor in the case of a legislative employee or Leadership in the case of a Legislator. Ultimately, what you publish is yours—as is the responsibility. So be sure.