



ETHICS GUIDANCE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Department of Commerce's Policy on the Approval and Use of Social Media provides guidance for Commerce employees to take full advantage of social media technologies while protecting the Department and its employees by mitigating the risks inherent in using these services without proper safeguards. Social media platforms include Facebook[®], LinkedIn[®], Twitter[®], YouTube[®], and others that enable simultaneous, direct, and instant communication between the user and a website or other users.

Social Media Use in A Personal Capacity

You must avoid blurring your personal and professional life when using social media and you should not establish relationships with working groups or affiliations that may reveal sensitive information about your job responsibilities.

- Do not use your Federal job title when using social media in a personal, unofficial capacity, although you may use your title as part of a biographical sketch when it is clear that you are posting in a personal capacity, such as posting a resume or listing employment history on a social network profile such as LinkedIn[®].
- Submit for review (not approval) any communication or materials you plan to post or upload on Government or non-Government websites that relates to the programs or operations of your bureau and to your official duties. The process for doing this is described in the Department's Public Communications policy, which is set forth in [Department Administrative Order \(DAO\) 219-1, § 11](#).
- Do not disclose any information obtained on the job that is not already publicly available, including classified information, personally identifiable information, proprietary or business confidential information, or pre-decisional information.

Most uses of social media for political activities are fine as long as these activities take place off duty and off premises. You may not post anything on social media that contains a solicitation request for a political party, partisan political candidate, or partisan political group. You also may not post a link on social media that contains a link to the contributions page or solicitation page of a political party, partisan political candidate, or partisan political group. You may write a personal blog expressing your political opinion or expressing support for a political party, partisan political candidate, or partisan political group; however, you must not use your official title or try to bolster your opinions by including the fact that you are a Federal employee.

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States
Department of Commerce

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The Commerce Internet Use Policy allows employees to use their Government computer and social media for personal use, provided that access is allowed by the operating unit CIO, use is minimal, and use does not interfere with office operations or involve commercial activities (profit-making or business), partisan political activities, or sexually explicit communications. Remember that information posted on social media platforms and web sites are available to a wide audience of users. How you present yourself on these websites will reflect on Commerce and the Federal Government.

Social Media Use in An Official Capacity

You must use only Department-approved accounts and official e-mail or other contact information for the creation and management of official accounts.

- Post only official agency positions from Department-approved accounts (i.e., not personal opinion).
- Identify yourself with your Department affiliation and/or official title when posting a comment related to Department work to a public web site.
- Do not post personally identifiable information unless it would otherwise be released consistent with the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Do not improperly use or post materials protected by copyright, trademark, patent, trade secret, data rights, or related protections for intellectual property. Proper use may require obtaining written permission from the owner of such information.
- Do not include surveys, polls, questionnaires, etc., on official social media platform/web 2.0 websites unless the questions have received Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Paperwork Reduction Act clearance.
- Monitor diligently any Department websites or pages that contain postings and/or responses by the public.
- Ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of posted information and allow for the correction of information not meeting that standard.
- Material posted to social media must also be posted on official Government websites. Alternative, non-electronic forms of information must be made available upon request.

Please familiarize yourself with these privileges and the responsibilities of using social media and related services by reading the complete policy at this link:

http://ocio.os.doc.gov/ITPolicyandPrograms/Policy_Standards/PROD01_009476.

For further guidance on these rules, contact the Ethics Law and Programs Division at 202-482-5384 or ethicsdivision@doc.gov.