

XXXVIII. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

A. Goals and Objectives.

The Board of Elections recognizes that social media can be an extremely useful tool to improve communication with its constituents, increase opportunities for community engagement, and expand access to public information. The following policy is to ensure our respectful and professional participation in social media, and to achieve the following objectives –

1. To increase transparency, participation, access and collaboration in elections through additional medial outlets.
2. To reach the public where they are with information the need to know how to vote, where to vote, and when to vote.
3. To educate the public about elections generally by offering a connection point to other election officials at the local, state, and national levels.

B. Board Use of Social Media Accounts.

Social media services used by the Board, including the creation and destruction of accounts associated with those services, will be at the discretion of the Board. Maintenance and preservation of active accounts on social media services will be the duty of the Director and Deputy Director. Communication over social media on behalf of the Board will be limited to the one-way provision of information. However, the Board recognizes the potential benefits of two-way communication with the public directly through social media, and intends to explore that option in the future.

The Board of Elections seal will be the Board's avatar where one is necessary. Where appropriate, secondary branding will reflect the brand identity of Portage County, including county logos, color schemes, mottos, and any other relevant information utilized consistently by other county entities to identify themselves as Portage County entities.

Permission to post on behalf of the Board shall be limited to the Director and Deputy Director. With official authorization from both the Director and Deputy Director, other employees may be asked to publish content, provided that no more than one additional employee has access at any given time, the use is limited to the express purpose authorized, and content is pre-approved by both the Director and Deputy Director prior to publishing. Employees may only post using office devices, and use is limited to office hours. Account passwords will be updated regularly, no less often than every 3 months.

Content must be informational in nature, and may include meeting notices, meeting minutes, polling location change notices, emergency notices, registration and absentee voting information, UOCAVA voting information, links to election results, poll worker recruiting messages, photographs of election activity and/or polling places, cross links to information from the Ohio Secretary of State's official accounts regarding elections, cross links from the Election Assistance Commission, Federal Elections Commission, and others regarding federal regulations, cross links from other agencies where appropriate, and other content deemed appropriate by the Director and Deputy Director.

Content will be updated, and messages checked, on a daily basis, except on weekends and holidays. All published content, including private messages, will be documented at least monthly, and stored electronically consistent with the Board's records retention policy. All deleted posts will be captured, briefly documented as to the reason for the deletion, and stored electronically consistent with the Board's records retention policy.

All profiles and accounts on utilized services shall contain a disclaimer that the account or profile is a service for sharing information, and instructing voters to contact the office directly to conduct official business. Accounts and profiles must prominently feature contact information for the Board office, as well as a link to the Board's website.

C. Public Use and Conduct.

The Board of Elections reserves the right to remove any material relating to its social media accounts on the following grounds –

1. Vulgar language.
2. Personal attacks of any kind, or comments or content that are discriminatory or harass on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, military status, genetic testing, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics.
3. Content that is deemed by the Director and Deputy Director to be spam, malware, or otherwise potentially harmful to Board property.
4. Statements advocating illegal activity, advertising commercial products or services, or promoting political parties, services, political organizations or candidates.
5. Statements revealing confidential or sensitive information, or infringing on copyrights, trademarks or other intellectual property.

The foregoing list is not exclusive, and the Director and Deputy Director are granted authority to remove any content posted on Board social media profiles or accounts that both agree distracts, defames, disseminates false information, or otherwise negatively reflects on the reputation of the Board. Violative content will be documented and deleted in accordance with the Board's records retention policy, and repeated violations may lead to the blocking or banning of offending parties at the discretion of the Director and Deputy Director.

D. Employee Use and Access.

The Board supports the free exchange of information and camaraderie among employees on the Internet. However, when internet blogging, chat room discussions, email, text messages or other forms of electronic communication extend to employees revealing confidential information about voters, the Board, or its employees, or posting inappropriate material about voters, the Board, or its employees, the employee who posts such information or assists in posting such material may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employees are reminded to be careful of the information they disclose on the Internet, including social media sites. The following uses of social media are strictly prohibited, whether on or off duty –

2. Comments or displays about coworkers, supervisors, voters or the Board that are vulgar, obscene, threatening, intimidating, harassing, or a violation of the Board's workplace policies against discrimination, harassment or hostility on account of age, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, disability, military status or other protected classes, statuses, or other characteristics.
3. Statements or uses of the Board's seal which are slanderous or detrimental, including evidence of the misuse of the Board's authority, information, insignia or equipment.
4. Uses of the Board's seal or official accounts to express support for a particular candidate, political campaign, political party, or political organization.
5. Unprofessional communication, including that which the Board could demonstrate has a substantial risk of negatively affecting the Board's reputation, mission or operations, such as slander or defamation.
6. Disclosure of confidential information acquired in the course of employment. Confidential information includes not only information that would not be available pursuant to a public records request, but also includes any information which does not relate to an issue of public concern.

7. Comments or displays which impact employees' abilities to perform their job duties or the Board's ability to maintain an efficient workplace.

Social media sites may be inspected by the Board or designated supervisors at any time to identify potential policy violations. If an employee believes that an online communication violates a Board policy, the employee should immediately report the communication to the Director and/or Deputy Director. The Board and designated supervisors may investigate the matter, determine whether such communication violates policy, and take appropriate action. This policy does not apply to communications protected by the U.S. or Ohio Constitutions.