



Social Media Tip Sheet

Social media provides valuable communication tools for judges. Yet, use of social media also raises ethical, security, and privacy concerns. Do not let social media posts undermine public confidence in the impartiality, integrity, or independence of the judiciary.

Ethical rules apply to all a judge's personal and official online activities, including those on social media. The use of social media raises several ethical considerations, including:

- Maintaining **confidentiality**
- Avoiding **impropriety** in all conduct
- Not lending the **prestige** of the office
- Not detracting from the **dignity** of the court or reflecting adversely on the court
- Not demonstrating special access to the court or **favoritism**
- Not commenting on **pending matters**
- Remaining within restrictions on **fundraising**
- Avoiding association with certain social issues that may be litigated or with organizations that **frequently litigate**
- Engaging in improper **political** activity

7 Common sense considerations as you participate on social media:

Think Before You Post. Nothing is “private” despite your best efforts. Do not post anything that you would not want to read on the front page of the newspaper or in a complaint of judicial misconduct. Analyze the post, comment, or blog to ensure you are not engaging in dialogue that demeans the prestige of the office, comments on issues that may arise before the court, or sends the impression that another has unique access to the court.

You Are Your Institution. Remember, the judge is perceived as the “court.” Whatever you do online also reflects on the court and you. For example, interaction on social media between a judge and a litigant or lawyer for a party may convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence you.

Security First. Do nothing to compromise the security of the courthouse and personnel or your family. Do not divulge the dates or locations of judicial programs or meetings; do not post pictures of a personal information about judges or judiciary employees without their express consent.

Keep Confidentiality. Keep the confidentiality of the court's work. Do not hint at the likely outcome in a pending case; do not make comments that reveal confidential case processing procedures; do not reveal non-public information.

Avoid Online Recommendations. Such recommendation may give the appearance that the court endorses the individual or things being recommended or that the prestige of the judicial office is being used to promote a private interest. Be careful of what you “like,” as it lends prestige to personal interests.

Maintain Professionalism, Honesty, and Respect. Avoid impropriety in all conduct. Engage only in activity that fosters public confidence in the integrity and independence of judges. Any statement by a judge, no matter what the platform, should be professional, dignified and calculated to preserve the high standards of the judicial office. Don't embarrass the court or yourself.

Remember the Public Trust. The public needs to be confident that the outside activities of judges do not undermine the court's impartiality or reputation and that the manner in which the court's business is conducted is not influenced by any commercial, political, or personal interests.