

# **Social Media Policy**

## **Northern District of Mississippi**

### **Background:**

The Northern District of Mississippi approves use of the Internet and Internet applications as a cost effective and efficient means of supporting the official business of the district. Because the Internet is an integral part of the district's computer resources, each employee is provided access to it. A user must exercise individual responsibility and sound judgment concerning the appropriate use within the broad guideline of "official business." Access and use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right.

As representatives of the Court, employees should conduct themselves in a manner that avoids embarrassment upon themselves and/or the Court. Users often believe that their postings are private because of social networking privacy features or that their comments are untraceable because they were made under a screen name, but this information may not be private and could cause damage to the employee's and/or Court's reputation if it becomes public.

### **Authority**

This social media and social networking policy applies to all Northern District of Mississippi employees, contractors, and interns. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees Excellence. These guidelines are not intended to apply to messages sent through email or a social networking site directed to specific individuals or to small groups of personal friends or family members that are not available for viewing by anyone beyond the small number of addressee(s). However, in all online activities the employee must abide by the Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees.

### **Relevant Technologies**

This policy includes (but is not limited to) the following specific social media technologies:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- You Tube
- Linkedin
- Personal Blogs
- Text Messages

Employees are reminded that use of Court assets (computers, Internet access, email, etc.) is intended for purposes relevant to the responsibilities assigned to each employee. Unless used for an "official business" purpose, accessing social networking sites is not authorized for any position during work hours.

### **Identification with the Court**

- An employee should not utilize a court-issued email address on a personal social networking site.
- Employees should also use caution when identifying their specific job title or place of employment.
- Employees should avoid communications that may adversely affect perceptions about the quality and objectivity of our work.
- Judicial employees are expected to avoid impropriety and conduct themselves in a manner that does not detract from the dignity and independence of the judiciary. Common sense counsels discretion in the nature and subject matter of Internet postings.
- (Refer to Canons 1, 2 and 4).

### **Confidential Information**

Just as court employees are prohibited from disclosing sensitive, non-public information to the media and general public, the same applies to social media. Confidential information is strictly forbidden from any discourse outside of the appropriate employees of the Court. Confidential information is not to be discussed or referred to on such sites, even in private messages between site members who have authorized access to the information. In addition, the United States District Court seal and logos should not be utilized on a personal social media site.

- (Refer to Canon 3).

### **Political Posts**

The employee may not participate in any social media that relates to partisan politics, including political issues, events, and politicians. (For example, posting pictures on a social networking profile that affiliate the employee with a political party or a partisan political candidate is forbidden).

As judiciary employees, we are expected to avoid impropriety and conduct ourselves in a manner that does not detract from the dignity and independence of the judicial system.

- (Refer to Canon 5).

**Security**

The employee should observe security protocol at all times. Employees must take care to avoid activity that would compromise the security of the courthouse and personnel. Posting of interior or exterior pictures of the courthouse, pictures of Court events, and/or pictures of judicial officers are prohibited.

It is also suggested that you regularly screen the social media or websites that you participate in to ensure nothing is posted about you which is contrary to the best interests of the Court.

The use of peer-to-peer technologies such as file sharing, chat rooms, and instant messaging for communicating with persons or entities outside the judiciary's private data communications network is prohibited. These programs pose extraordinary security risks to the judiciary's information technology infrastructure and will, in accordance with the policy adopted by the Judicial Conference, be blocked at the Internet gateways until such time as the security risks posed by their use can be eliminated.

Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sharion Aycock  
Chief Judge, Northern District of Mississippi

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Social Media Policy Agreement**

By signing this agreement, I acknowledge that I have read and agree to abide by the Social Media Policy for the Northern District of Mississippi.

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Signature

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Date