



Complete this survey before we start.....

Hashtags & Headlines: Social Media in Public Service





MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY[™]
EXTENSION

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Community Development

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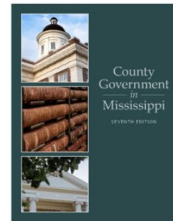
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News

June 30, 2025

[Extension releases latest book on municipal government](#)

November 13, 2024

[Virtual workshop helps aspiring municipal candidates](#)

August 15, 2024

GCD.MSSTATE.EDU

Disclaimer



⚖️ I'm not an attorney — but I strongly recommend you consult yours.



💻 Social media changes faster than my daughter changes outfits.



The Facebook algorithm has changed three times since you sat down.




Remember: you're not just posting as yourself. You're posting as a headline waiting to happen.



	Ages 18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Facebook	68	78	70	59
Instagram	76	66	36	19
LinkedIn	40	41	30	15
X (formerly Twitter)	38	25	15	8
Pinterest	43	43	33	22
Snapchat	65	32	14	4
YouTube	93	94	86	65
WhatsApp	30	40	28	18
Reddit	46	35	11	4
TikTok	59	40	26	10
BeReal	10	2	1	<1

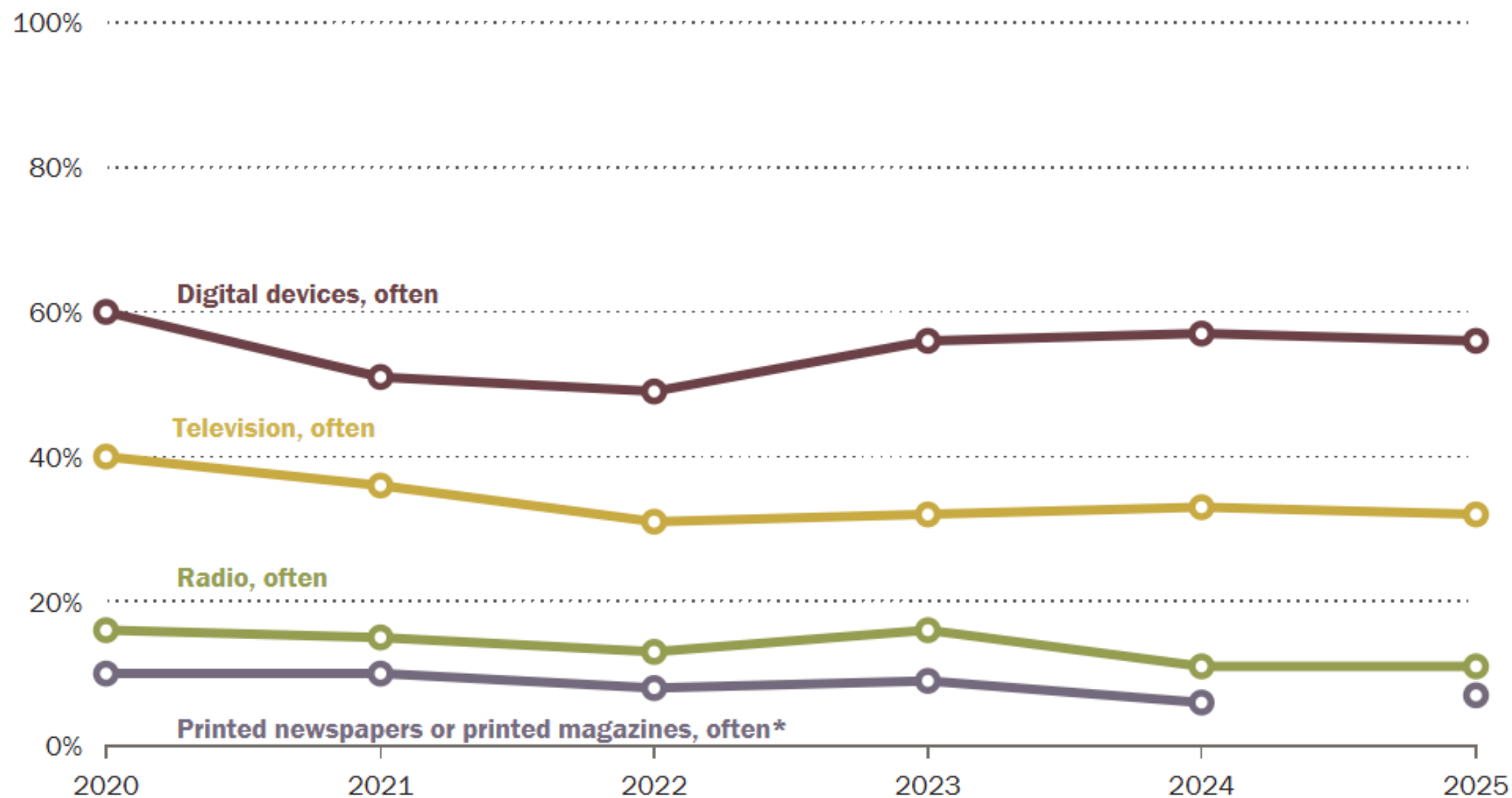
**Who uses
each social
media
platform?**


A close-up, slightly blurred image of a person's hand touching a tablet screen. The screen displays a line graph with a red line and several data points. The background is dark and out of focus.

A large majority of U.S. adults (86%) say they at least sometimes get news from a smartphone, computer or tablet, including 56% who say they do so often.

News consumption across all platforms

% of U.S. adults who say they get news from ...



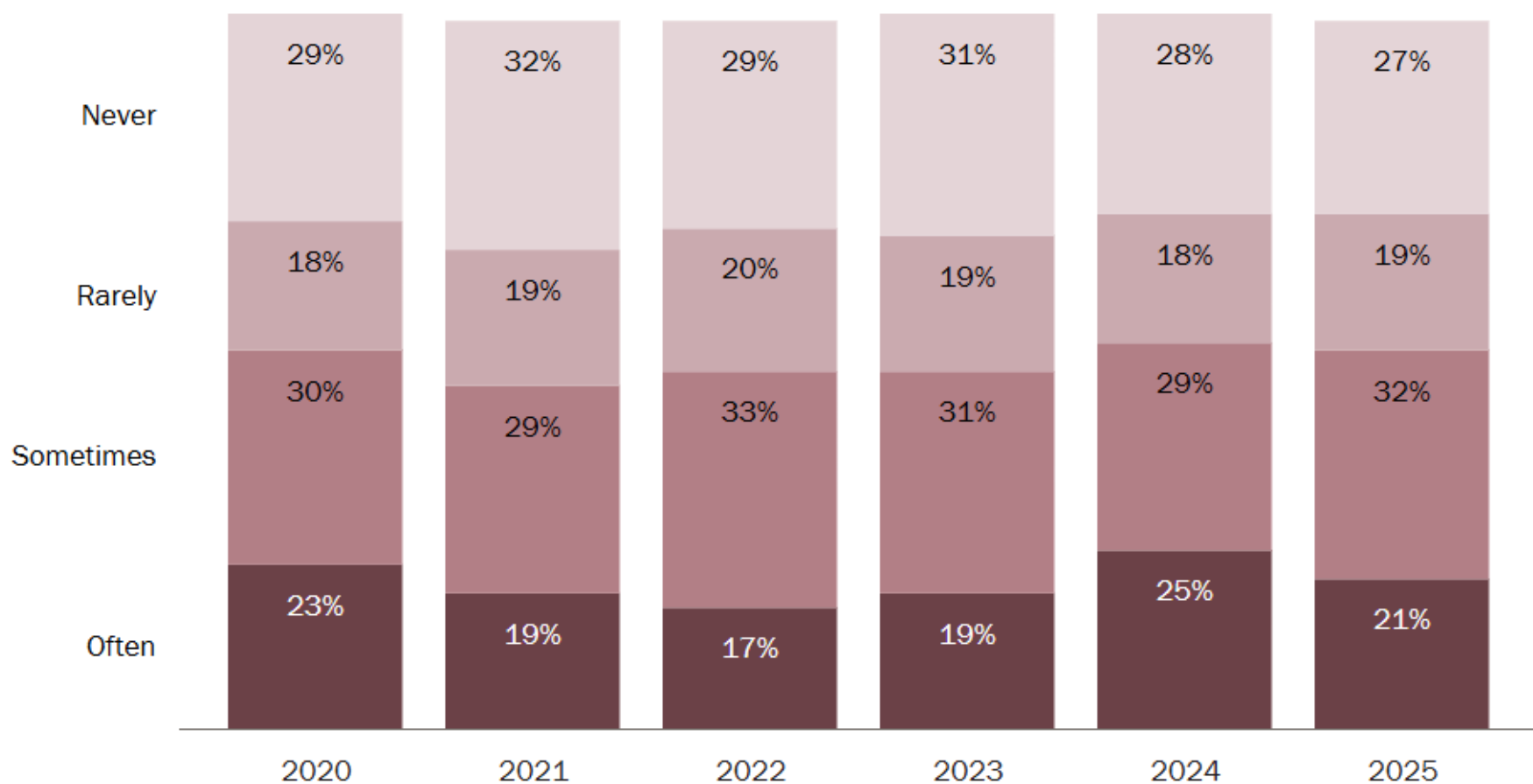


Half of U.S. adults
(53%) say they at
least sometimes get
news from social
media



News consumption on social media

% of U.S. adults who say they get news from social media ...

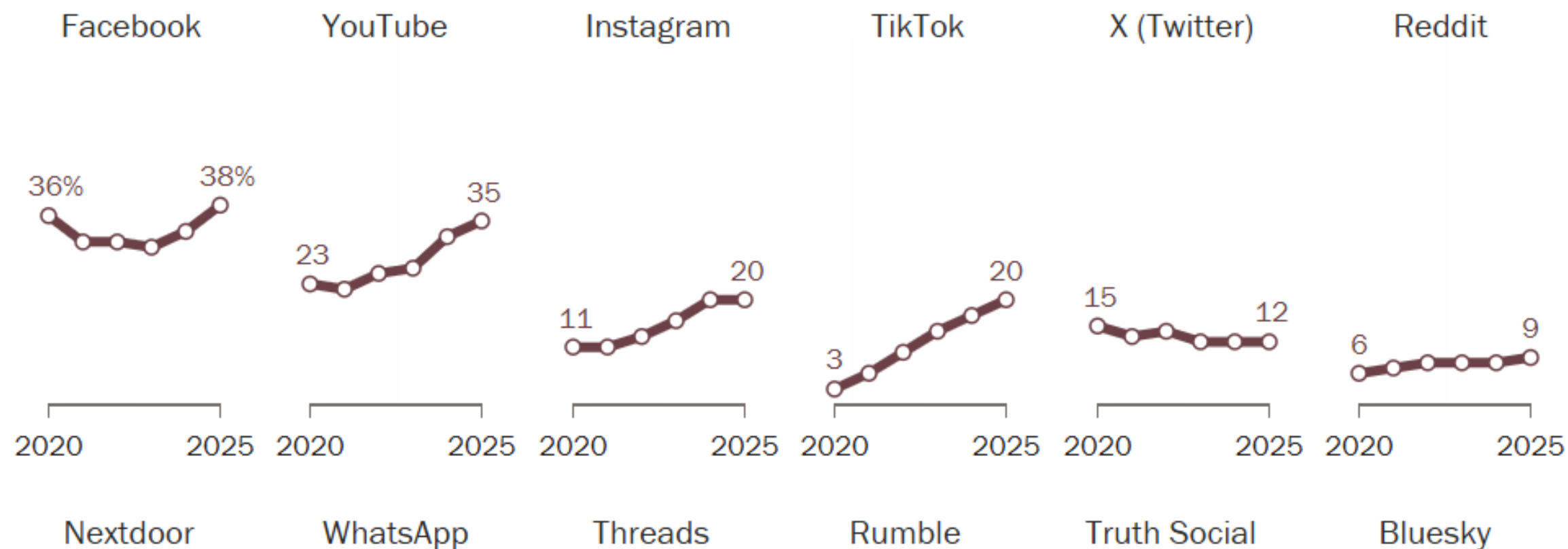


Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown. Respondents who do not use the internet did not receive this question; they are included with those who said “Never,” along with those who do not say they get news from digital devices.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 18-24, 2025.

News consumption by social media site

% of U.S. adults who say they **regularly** get news on each social media site






Can public officials
block critics on
social media post or
delete comments?





Recent Supreme Court Rulings

- In **O'Connor-Ratcliff v. Garnier**, the issue was whether school board members violated the First Amendment in blocking parents from their board-related Twitter and Facebook accounts.
 - In **Lindke v. Freed**, the issue was whether a city manager could block a constituent from his personal Facebook page.
 - **March 2024**
- 

Points to Consider

- Maintain clear separation between *official* and *personal* social media accounts.
- “Mixed-use” accounts—used for both personal and official purposes—create significant legal risk (*Lindke v. Freed*).
- To retain the right to block individuals or delete comments, keep the account strictly personal and avoid any appearance of acting on behalf of the government.
- Blocking users or deleting comments on an *official* account may expose the official or employee to potential liability under **Section 1983** for violating an individual’s **First Amendment rights**.

Points to Consider

- Accounts clearly operated by a **local government** (city, county, or agency) are considered *official government accounts*.
 - Examples include pages for:
 - A municipality or county government
 - Specific departments (e.g., Police Department, Parks & Recreation)
- Actions on these accounts—such as **deleting comments** or **blocking users**—are likely considered “**state action**” under the **First Amendment** and **Section 1983**.
- The same applies to **office-specific accounts** that are transferred from one officeholder to the next.

Points to Consider

- Officials should **clearly label** personal accounts to distinguish them from official ones.
 - Example disclaimer: *“This is the personal page of [official’s name]. The views expressed herein are strictly my own.”*
- The **Supreme Court’s Lindke decision** recognizes that using such a disclaimer creates a “**heavy presumption**” the page is for personal speech only.
- However, this presumption can be **rebutted** if the official uses the personal account to **communicate government business** or act with **official authority**.

Points to Consider

- Local governments should formally define which officials or employees are authorized to speak on the government's behalf via social media.
- This can be done through a written policy or ordinance outlining the scope of authority.
- Such a policy may not be determinative in a Section 1983 lawsuit, since authority can also arise by custom or usage.
- However, a written policy provides strong evidence of the government's intent—either granting or restricting authority to post official communications.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: SOCIAL MEDIA



The results of this flowchart do not imply that the ACLU of Iowa is pursuing or would pursue legal action on your behalf or in any case. This chart is intended for as general legal information, not legal advice. If you have questions, seek advice from a lawyer.

Facebook



Facebook Profile



Everyone with a Facebook account has a Facebook profile for personal use.



With your profile, you can also create Facebook Pages and be added to Facebook Pages.

Facebook Page

- Content is Public
- Professional Appearance
- Unlimited Followers
- Business Tools
- Assign Access for Admin
- Ads

Manage Page

MS Local Gov Guy

Professional dashboard

Insights

Ad Center

Create ads

Boost Instagram post

Settings

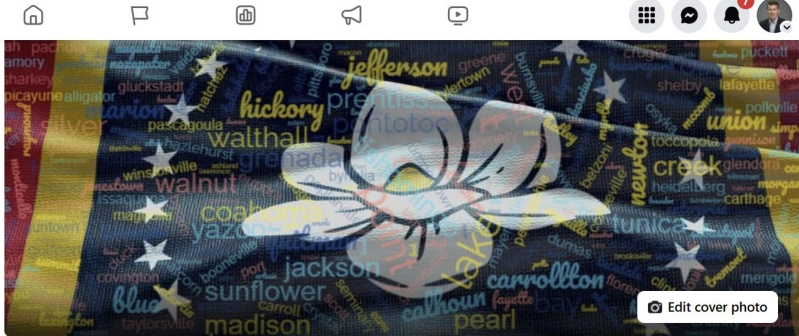
More tools
Manage your business across Meta apps.

Meta Verified

Leads Center

Meta Business Suite

Nonprofit Manager



MS Local Gov
Guy

579 followers • 306 following

Professional dashboard

Edit

Advertise

Posts About Mentions Reviews Reels Photos More

Intro

A Mississippi State University Extension Specialist empowering MS's local government leaders for stronger communities. Sharing insights, resources, & best practices for effective Gov.

Edit bio



Jason Camp

1.1K friends

+ Add to story

Edit profile

Posts About Friends Photos Reels Events More

Intro

Add bio

Edit details



What's on your mind?

Live video

Photo/video

Life update

Respond to Issues, Not Emotions

When the comments get heated...

- Pause before you post – take a breath before responding.
- Stick to facts – respond with ordinance, policy, or verified information.
- Avoid personal tone – reply as the office, not the individual.
- Don't take the bait – one clear, factual reply is enough.
- Redirect respectfully – “Please contact City Hall so we can help directly.”

Key takeaway: Professionalism in your response strengthens public trust.

Example

✗ Escalates the Issue

Citizen Comment:

“This board wastes tax dollars! You people don’t care about us!”

Official Reply:

“That’s not true! You clearly don’t understand how city budgets work.”

✓ Models Professionalism

Citizen Comment:

“This board wastes tax dollars! You people don’t care about us!”

Official Reply:

“Thank you for your comment. City spending decisions are discussed in open meetings. You can view this year’s budget here: [city website link].”

Legitimate Reasons to Delete a Comment

- Profanity or obscene language.**

Posts that contain vulgar, sexually explicit, or grossly offensive language may be removed under a clear “no profanity” rule.

- Threats or incitement.**

Direct threats of violence or comments encouraging unlawful acts can be removed and reported.

- Discriminatory or harassing content.**

Slurs, hate speech, or targeted harassment violate most community-standards policies.

- Spam or unrelated advertising.**

Posts promoting businesses, products, or services unrelated to the city’s content.

- Personal identifying information.**

Disclosure of private data like addresses, phone numbers, or personal employee information.

- Duplicate or repetitive posts.**

Same comment posted repeatedly to disrupt discussion.



Screenshot Before Deleting.

Reasons That Are *Not* Defensible

Deletion based on the **viewpoint or criticism** expressed is almost always unconstitutional.

Examples:

- Removing a comment because it's **critical of the mayor, board, or policy decision**.
- Deleting a post that is **factually incorrect** but not abusive (better to correct it publicly).
- Hiding comments **just because they make the city look bad**.
- Courts have repeatedly said government pages that allow comments create a **public forum**—and viewpoint discrimination in that forum violates the First Amendment.

Poll Managers Political Activity

The Honorable
Sara Dionne-
July 10, 2019

- Prior to Election Day, can a Poll Manager show support for a candidate in any of the following ways:
 - “Like” and/or promote on **Social Media**
- While there are no specific statutory prohibitions against the activities listed in your letter, we have previously opined that it would be an inherent conflict of interest for one to campaign for any candidate whose name will be on the ballot in an election in which he or she will be, in part, conducting. *MS AG Op., Miller* (June 17, 2010).
- For your information, we enclose a copy of our opinion addressed to The Honorable Danny Glaskox, dated June 21, 2019 which addresses election commissioners “liking” candidates on Facebook.

**Impartiality of
Election
Commissioners**
The Honorable
Danny Glaskox
June 21, 2019

Election commissioners must refrain from any acts that could create even the perception that they support or oppose a particular candidate seeking elective office. As stated by the Court in *Meeks*, “if this seems harsh, it is certainly less so than the adverse impact upon the public interest if our people come to doubt the integrity of the system.”

Section 23-15-561 of the Mississippi Code

Kimberly P. Turner
May 17, 2019

- Within the previous week, we have fielded several phone calls from both concerned voters as well as candidates regarding the legality of “giveaways” by candidates as a part of their campaigns to solicit support in the upcoming Primary and/or General Election. By way of example, one candidate has launched a Facebook page on which voters may “like” certain content which, in turn, enters the voter to potentially win prizes of monetary value; while another candidate has promoted a similar giveaway except the winners of the prizes will be drawn at random live at an Anniversary Open House of a local business.

Continued....

Section 23-15-561 of the Mississippi Code

Kimberly P. Turner
May 17, 2019

- Section 23-15-561, Miss. Code Ann., prohibits any candidate “**or other** person to publicly or privately put up or in any way offer any prize, cash award or other item of value to be raffled, drawn for, played for or contested for in order to encourage persons to vote or refrain from voting in any election, during any primary or any other election.”
- The prohibition in Section 23-15-561 **applies to all lotteries held to encourage persons to vote or refrain from voting on days when voters are casting their ballots including the forty-five (45) day absentee balloting period.**

Conduct of Mayor and Councilmen

Jeffrey J. Turnage, Esq.-May 20, 2016

- You inquire as to what actions, if any, the municipality may take in response to the conduct of the mayor and councilmen, individually.
- **Social Media Postings**. The City has a social media policy which prohibits harassment, intimidation, discriminatory remarks and other on-line conduct tending to injure the public service or which constitute harassment or bullying. Pursuant to this social media policy, the City has disciplined a number of employees. If a member of the City Council or the Mayor were to violate the City's social media policy, would they be subject to discipline under the City's Personnel Policy Manual? If so, what form of discipline is available to the Mayor and City Council for offending members of the body?
 - Thus, municipal elected officials would not be subject to disciplinary action for violations of the municipality's policies and procedures. Additionally, because [Section 25-5-1 et seq.](#) preempts any authority of municipal governing authorities to “remove” municipal elected officials from office, an ordinance or charter amendment would have no effect.

**Use
of Social Media for
Collection of
Unpaid
Fines/Warrants
October 30, 2012**

- Previous opinions have addressed publication of lists of unpaid fines printed in the newspaper but not through social media (with the possibility of comments from the public.) Would the same standard apply?
 - our research has found no applicable state law that would directly prohibit a city from publishing such information on a social media site or website.
 - However, our office has no knowledge of the appropriate use policies or user agreements in place by either the proposed social media site or website/internet provider that the City of Lucedale proposes to use. It is possible that use of these sites in this manner might violate such policies or agreements and could result in the City of Lucedale breaching a contractual agreement. Additionally, the City could incur liability if it were to voluntarily publish incorrect information.

Open Meetings Complaint

- **Samuel Saul Richardson vs Jackson**

- Samuel Saul Richardson filed a complaint against the Mayor and City Council for the City of Jackson, alleging that the city failed to properly provide notice for its FY2020 Budget Hearings....based information from social media post.
- Finally, there is no requirement in the Open Meetings Act that public bodies post notice of open meetings on Facebook, nor that open meetings be held outside of “regular working hours.”

Open Meeting Complaints

- **Ashley D. Morris vs Lee County Board of Supervisors**

- Ashley Morris alleges the Board of Supervisors for Lee County violated the Open Meetings Act. She states she attended the October 17, 2024, November 4, 2024 and November 18, 2024 meetings, but that the agenda is not available for public review by the board. **She states that Supervisor George Rutledge posts agendas on his Facebook page prior to meetings but that it is not an official county website.**
- **The Open Meetings Act does not require that the agenda or meeting materials be made available to the public in advance of the meeting.** Section 25-41-5(3) only requires that “[a]n agenda and materials that will be distributed to members of the public body and that have been made available to the staff of the public body in sufficient time for duplication and forwarding to the members of the public body shall be made available to the public at the time of the meeting.” **Furthermore, “made available” means that a public body is only required to provide a copy of its agenda and materials for inspection by the public and does not necessarily require a public body to provide every member of the attending public free copies of its agenda and materials.**

Open Meeting Complaints

- **Viki Eggers Mason vs Aberdeen**

- **Finally, it should be noted that, while it is a laudable practice for public bodies to livestream open meetings, it is not required by the Open Meetings Act.** Even when a public body is conducting a meeting through “teleconference or video means” pursuant to Section 25-41-5(2) of Act, a public body is only required to ensure that “the equipment allow[s] all members of the public body and members of the public who attend the meeting to hear the deliberations of the public body.” As such, a public body may (1) use the equipment to allow only board members remote access to the meeting while providing the public a physical location to attend an open meeting in person; and/or (2) provide the public the ability to remotely view the meeting through electronic means. See, *Shepard v. Miss. Charter School Authorizer Bd.*, Open Meetings Case M22-019. Either method ensures the public has an opportunity to observe an open meeting conducted through teleconference or video means with the equipment utilized by the public body. **Accordingly, livestreaming only portions of an open meeting, when a public body provides a location for the public to attend in person, does not violate the Act. However, this practice may create confusion with the public as to whether a public body is appropriately conducting its meetings.**

Mississippi Public Records Act

- **25-61-3**
- **Public body**" shall mean any department, bureau, division, council, commission, committee, subcommittee, board, agency and any other entity of the state or a political subdivision thereof, and any municipal corporation and any other entity created by the Constitution or by law, executive order, ordinance or resolution. The term "public body" includes the governing board of a charter school authorized by the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board. Within the meaning of this chapter, the term "entity" shall not be construed to include individuals employed by a public body or any appointed or elected public official.

Note: It doesn't exempt public officials' records when those records *document official business*. It just prevents the Act from being used to compel disclosure of someone's personal or private papers **solely because** they are an employee or officeholder.

Mississippi Public Records Act

- **25-61-3**
- **Public records"** shall mean all books, records, papers, accounts, letters, maps, photographs, films, cards, tapes, recordings or reproductions thereof, and any other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, having been used, being in use, or prepared, possessed or retained for use in the conduct, transaction or performance of any business, transaction, work, duty or function of any public body, or required to be maintained by any public body.

Public Records Complaints

- **Finlayson vs. Ocean Springs-May 2024**

- On June 5, 2023, Kenneth Finlayson requested “**any records which show who may make public comment on [the Ocean Springs Police Department Facebook page] as well as any correspondence related to restricting comments.**” On June 14, 2023 Mr. Finlayson followed up via email on the status of his public records request. Later that day, the city responded to his email by stating “the conversations are considered attorney/client privileged and will not be released” and provided a copy of the city’s social media policy.
- In an email attached to his complaint, Mr. Finlayson explained that he is restricted/blocked from posting comments to the Ocean Springs Police Department’s Facebook page. **He states, “[t]he intent of my public records request is to attempt to understand who is allowed to make comment on their public posts, and who is making those decisions, and based on what policy.”** The complainant also makes assertions under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution based on his inability to post comments on the department’s Facebook page.

Continued

Public Records Complaints

- **Finlayson vs. Ocean Springs-May 2024**
 - In response to Mr. Finlayson's complaint, the city explained that an incident occurred on May 31, 2023, in which an **individual made a video recording of his interaction with personnel of the Ocean Springs Police Department and placed the video on the internet. Subsequently, threats were made to city employees through social media and in over 5,000 calls to the city and its police department, threatening litigation against the city and physical violence to police officers and their families.** The response quotes several of those threats. The city had previously prohibited comments on the Facebook page of the police department and later restricted comments on the city's general Facebook page. The city states that any records not already produced to the complainant are exempt under Section 25-1-102.

Continued

Public Records Complaints

- **Finlayson vs. Ocean Springs-May 2024**
 - Clearly, any communications between employees or officials of the City of Ocean Springs and the city attorney related to this matter are exempt and cannot be produced to the complainant. **In response to the request, the city produced a responsive record, the city's written social media policy. To the extent the complainant is seeking to understand that policy, the city is not obligated to answer questions.** The complainant's references to First Amendment rights are outside the scope of this proceeding. The city has produced a responsive record and has not violated the Public Records Act.



Social Media Policy Example

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to address non-official city government personnel use of personal social media during and after working hours. The city respects the legal rights of its employees to use their own devices and time to express their opinions through social media, but also must clarify that responsibilities of municipal employees do not always end with their work day. The city is committed to the appropriate use of social networks for business purposes. Likewise, the city recognizes that its employees participate in social networks for personal reasons.

The city therefore establishes the following policies and guidelines for the use of social networks, whether the social networks are accessed within or outside of the workplace. The city has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is “spoken” on behalf of the City-on-City social media sites.

Social Media Policy

Starkville

Personal Use of Social Media

The following policies and guidelines apply to employees' use of social network sites for personal reasons (i.e., not on the City's behalf):

1. In general, what a City employee does on his/her own time is his/her own business, but the responsibilities of a City employee do not always end when the employee is off the clock. Employees may choose to personally participate in social networking sites. These accounts must remain personal in nature and be used to share personal opinions or non-work-related information. This helps ensure a distinction between sharing personal and organizational views.
2. In addition, employees should never use their government e-mail account or password in conjunction with a personal social networking site. If employees identify themselves as a city employee on social media platforms, then they should indicate that views expressed on that platform are not official views of the City.
3. Employees who use social network sites (whether City or non-city) for personal, rather than business, reasons are prohibited from representing or suggesting that their posts are approved, sponsored or authorized by the City, or that they are speaking on the City's behalf or on behalf of any City client or business affiliate.
4. Employees must use City-owned computers and electronic devices (including ipads and smartphones), City-licensed software, and other electronic equipment and facilities primarily for business purposes. Incidental use for personal social networking during work time is not permissible. Personal use will consume more than an insignificant amount of time and resources that could otherwise be used for business purposes, and would interfere with employee productivity that will preempt any business activity.

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Social Media Policy Starkville

4. Employees utilizing social media for personal use shall not use the City's official city marks nor should they use the City government's name to promote or endorse any product, cause, or political candidate.
5. If an employee is contacted by the media or the press to provide a comment on the City's behalf, the request must be channeled through the Communications Officer, Department Head or the City Clerk.

Facebook Local Alerts



- For Use by local government, public health agency and first responder Pages only.
 - Local Alerts can be used in emergencies as well as in less critical situations where timely information is valuable.
-
- **Appropriate uses for local alerts include but are not limited to:**
 - Active shooter
 - Public health emergencies from public health agencies
 - Road closure
 - Traffic alert
 - Storm warning
 - Flash flood warning
 - Change / suspension in service (e.g., trains, garbage pickup, etc.)
 - Blackout
 - Missing person case





City of Hattiesburg-Government



The City of Hattiesburg operates this Facebook page as a channel to inform the public on news that directly impacts residents - from road closures and public safety notices to project announcements, special events and more.

Page · City

HATTIESBURG, CITY OF
is responsible for this Page

Hattiesburg, MS, United States, Mississippi

(601) 545-4500

info@hattiesburgms.com

hattiesburgms.com

Photos

[See all photos](#)



1w Like Reply



Comment as Jason Camp



City of Hattiesburg-Government



October 3 at 2:15 PM ·

TRAFFIC NOTICE | Saturday, October 4 Downtown Events

October is the Greatest Month to be a Hattiesburger, and tomorrow's full schedule of events means downtown streets will be busy. To help keep everything safe, the following streets will be closed at different times for the following events:

Lucky Rabbit's Street Market
6 a.m. – 6 p.m. | Mobile St. (E. Pine St. to E. 2nd St.)

Food Truck Festival
7 a.m. – 6 p.m. | Main St. (E. Pine St. to McLeod St.)

Oktoberfest at The Porter
11 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Forrest St. (W. Pine St. to Eaton St.)

Hattiesburger Showdown
12 p.m. – 5 p.m. | Buschman St. (Main St. to Walnut St.)

Hattiesburg an Blan
1 p.m. – 10 p.m. | Main St. (E. Front St. to E. Pine St.)

Jamie Lissow at The Saenger Theatre
5 p.m. – 10 p.m. | Forrest St. (W. Front St. to W. Pine St.)

Please note: The times listed reflect street closures, not event start times.

If you're joining the festivities, we'll see you downtown! If you're just passing through, we appreciate your patience. These closures are all part of making this the greatest October of all time.





City of Oxford

19K followers • 28 following

Following

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Intro

City of Oxford, Mississippi
107 Courthouse Square
Oxford, MS 38655
662-236-1310

Page · Government organization

Oxford, MS, United States, Mississippi

+1 662-236-1310

Posts

Filters



City of Oxford is with Visit Oxford and 6 others.

4h ·



Yep.

That's going to be a BEAUTIFUL day.

Free family photos. October 26th. Morgan Family Park.

If you haven't already, sign up at <https://www.oxms.net/free-family-photos-signup>

Details about the day will be emailed to you on Monday, October 20th.

6:03

LTE



The City of Natchez, MS

...



48m · 🌐

We've become aware that a scam text message claiming to be from the Mississippi Department of Revenue has been circulating.

This is a fake message, do not reply, delete the message and report it as spam.

The message reads:

"Mississippi Department of Revenue

Your tax refund request has been processed and approved. Please provide valid payment information by [Date]. After confirmation, funds will be deposited into your bank account or mailed to you as a paper check within 1–2 business days.

[Link]

- Failure to submit the required payment information by [Date], will result in permanent forfeiture of this refund under Mississippi Code §27-7-313.

Reply "Y", then close and reopen this message to activate the link. If the issue persists, copy and paste the link directly into your browser.

Mississippi Department of Revenue | Jackson, Mississippi | Official State Government Agency"

Again, this is not from the Mississippi Department of Revenue, it is a scam, do not engage.



6:00



Town of Monticello

3d • 🌐



Brent Wallace Photography of Hattiesburg will soon be capturing the beauty of our town! He plans to begin at the Courthouse, Lake Mary, Cooper's Ferry, and the Civic Center — and after visiting, he said he loves the look of Monticello and believes these will be some beautiful shots. 🌅

These photos will showcase what makes our community so special, and we can't wait to share them with everyone soon!

👉 Reminder for our local businesses: please keep your lights on and blinds open tonight from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM to help make sure our town shines bright in the photos! ✨



Like



Share



63

8 shares



City Of Raymond

3h ·



Attention Everyone! The Great Raymond Christmas Tree hunt of 2025 is officially underway! Our own Mayor Harris has been travelling far and wide searching for the perfect tree! No Luck Yet, so that's where we need YOU! Be on the lookout for a 20-30 ft, perfectly full, cedar tree that we can display right here in our Historic Downtown Raymond! When you find it, please contact City Hall at 601-857-8041 and let us know! THANK YOU!



You and 22 others

6 comments 17 shares



Like



Comment



Share



City of Farmington, MS

Sep 9 · ⚙️

We need some feedback from the citizens!
The city spends right at \$10,000 annually to have the snowflakes put up during the holidays! That is roughly \$6000 in electricity bill and close to \$4000 in keeping them maintained, \$7500 was spent last year replacing LED lights and when they were taken down about 50% or more will have to be reworked this year! Question is do you prefer we continue to do this or put that money into decorating the park and having Christmas in the park!
We could add to the amount of decoration each year making it bigger!
Please let us know your thoughts on here or by emailing me at rickyfields894@gmail.com
Thank You!

👍❤️ You and 76 others 195 comments 20 shares



6:05

LTE



City of Farmington, MS

Sep 9 · ⚙️

Meta AI >

What people are saying

Citizens are divided between keeping the annual snowflake decorations and allocating funds to create a Christmas in the park event. Some suggest combining both ideas, reducing the number of snowflakes, and adding park decorations to create a festive atmosphere for families.

Most relevant ▾



Aaron Bullock · 4w

Both. Less snowflakes(don't need one on every post), and medium sized decor at the park to allow for families to take pictures. Not many people just hang out outside during the cold months.

Reply 11



▾ View 1 reply



Tiffany Lacy · 4w

I love the snowflakes. More people would see the snowflakes on their way home than would drive to the park everyday to look at the lights.

Reply 18



Chelsea Boyte · 4w

Selfishly, I say snowflakes. People traveling thru can enjoy them as well as the residents. I am not a resident, but I come thru Farmington on weeknights and really enjoy seeing the



Comment as MS Local G...





*Extending
knowledge.
Changing lives.*

Jason Camp

Extension Specialist
Center for Government &
Community Development

662-325-3141

Jason.Camp@msstate.edu



MS Local Gov Guy

