

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

PREFACE:

For the courts, social media may provide valuable tools. However, the use of social media also raises concerns for courts and court employees. Participation in social media offers everyone the opportunity to publish their thoughts. But, not everyone will be careful about what they publish, and the ability to completely erase or delete inappropriate statements is impossible.

To address the ethical, security and privacy concerns raised by the use of social media by court employees, the following policy has been adopted to govern chambers staff, pro se law clerks, and employees of the Clerk's Office, United States Probation Office and United States Pretrial Services Office:

POLICY:

Employees of the District Court, Eastern District Missouri using or accessing social networking and similar Internet sites (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Classmates, Digg, Facebook, Tumblr, Bebo, Flickr, LinkedIn, LiveJournal, MySpace, Personal Blogs, Personal Websites, Wiki, Twitter, Yahoo! Groups, YouTube) must follow these guidelines.

1. Government time and government equipment are for official use only. Access to social networking sites on government equipment or government time is prohibited unless authorized by a supervisor or manager.
2. Even when using social networking services with personal (non-government) equipment on the employee's own time, the employee should:
 - a. **Think before you identify yourself.** Employees should consider carefully whether it is necessary to identify their occupation or place of employment. If necessary, the employee should only identify him/her self as an employee of the Federal Judiciary (not an employee of the US District Courts, US Probation or US Pretrial Services Office). Whether or not an employee identifies him/her self as an employee of the Federal Judiciary be aware that others may recognize the employee as such.
 - b. **Adhere to the Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees.** Employees must always follow the code of conduct which prohibits employees from participating in partisan politics and requires that judiciary employees not lend the prestige of their offices to advance or appear to advance the private interests of others. Employees should consult the Code of Conduct for Judiciary Employees before posting any information.

Policy Revised December 22, 2016

- c. **Speak for yourself, not the Court.** An employee must avoid the appearance that communications by the individual represent the official position of the Court;
 - (1) An employee must avoid communications that may adversely affect perceptions about the quality and objectivity of the Court's work.
 - (2) An employee must not use the Court's seal, letterhead, or any other distinctive Court insignia.
 - d. **Maintain confidentiality.** An employee must not discuss confidential or sensitive information obtained as a result of working for the Court.
 - e. **Observe security protocol.** An employee should protect the security of judges and judiciary employees; do not divulge the dates or locations of Court (or other judicial) programs or meetings; do not post pictures of, or personal information about, judges or judiciary employees without their express consent and do not post pictures of courthouses or other judiciary buildings.
 - f. **Always think before you post.** Notwithstanding privacy agreements or promises made by sites, services or other users, anything posted may become widely accessible, and disseminated by others and is likely to remain in the public domain long after it is posted. The employee should ask, "Would it now, or will it someday, compromise or embarrass the individual or others if the post is seen by people beyond the immediate intended recipients?"
 - g. **Respect your audience.** An employee must not use language that is derogatory of a person's race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Obscenity, personal attacks and other language that would not be acceptable in the workplace are also not permitted.
3. Questions about what can or cannot be posted should be directed to the employee's immediate supervisor or manager.

Social Networking Acknowledgement Form

I have read the Social Networking Policy and acknowledge my responsibility to conform to the principles for social media usage while being an employee of the judiciary. I acknowledge that I will abide by all applicable policies.

Employee Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____