

National Association of Parliamentarians' (NAP's) Guidelines Toward Social Media and Social Networking including Overview and Definitions

An Overview of NAP's Guidelines Toward Social Media and Social Networking

NAP recognizes the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the NAP and its members, their parliamentary services, educational products, constituent divisions (e.g. state and provisional associations and units), and clients. NAP also recognizes the importance of its members joining in and helping shape parliamentarians' conversation and direction through blogging and interaction in social media. Thus, NAP is committed to supporting its members' ability to interact knowledgeably and responsibly for educational, collaborative, business, and other mutually beneficial purposes on the internet through the use of social media and social networking outlets.

Social Media Definition

Social Media is defined (by *Creative Media Farm*) to be "primarily internet and mobile-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings that most often refer to activities that integrate technology, telecommunications, and social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos, and audio." (According to *Onlinematters*), "Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website."

Social Networking Definition

Social Networking is defined (by *About.com*) as, "The process of building online communities, often accomplished both through 'groups' and 'friends lists' that allow greater interaction on websites." Social media/social networking outlets include, but are not limited to, the following examples: email discussion lists, newsgroups, online postings/comments, LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Flickr, Indaba, Digg, YouTube, wikis and blogging, among others.

Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to all current and future NAP social media and social networking outlets:

1. *First of all ... Be accountable.*

Members ("you") are responsible for what you post. You are personally responsible for any of your online activity conducted with any NAP-related or other third-party email address, NAP logo employed, and/or which can be traced back to the NAP, and/or which uses NAP or NAP constituent divisions' assets. When using an NAP-related email address, employing the NAP logo, or those of the NAP constituent divisions to engage in any social media or social networking activity, all actions are public, and you will be held fully responsible for any and all said activities and their consequences.

2. *Remember that the Internet is not Anonymous and it does not Forget.*

Everything written on the web can be traced back to its author one way or another, and often very easily. Information is backed up frequently and repeatedly, and posts in one forum are usually replicated in others through trackbacks and reposts or references in other ways.

3. *Be Professional, and Follow All Legal and Ethics Requirements, and Maintain Decency.*
Respect copyright, fair use, and financial disclosure laws, as well as adherence to the NAP Ethics Code. Do not upload materials without permission. All postings should comply with applicable confidentiality, privacy, and disclosure policies. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenities, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in a workplace, reported in the New York Times, or constitute action that you would not want, e.g. your spouse, children, clients, or your clergyman to see and to realize it had come from you. Do not post or link such materials. Avoid topics that may be objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics or religion.
4. *When Signing on to Any Social Media*
When signing on to any social media such as the NAP Facebook page that would be sanctioned by NAP for social networking purposes, go to privacy settings first and make the proper adjustments. Default settings are often all too wide open, if left as such.
5. *Be Transparent.*
Always identify yourself by name and, when appropriate, identify your affiliation such as a member of a constituent division or in which capacity you are making whatever comment you have offered. When reposting or referencing a post on one of the NAP's online sites, you should provide a link to the original post or story. All references, where possible, should link back to the source.
6. *Do Not "Return Fire."*
If a negative post or comment is found online about the NAP or yourself, do not counter with another negative post. Instead, publicly offer to remedy the situation if such is appropriate under the circumstances, or seek competent advice from an NAP officer or another advisor you trust such as personal counsel to consider what options you might have to respond appropriately.
7. *Do not let Social Networking take over your Life.*
Social networking sites can be good tools for developing your business relationships, and maintaining dialogue with fellow parliamentarians, but they can also turn into big time-wasters. Social networking activities should not take precedence over NAP member parliamentarians' practice and the rest of your functions, activities, relationships, and life.
8. *Individual Members Using NAP Social Media such as NAP Facebook Speak for Themselves—not NAP.*
When you as an individual discuss NAP or NAP-related matters, make it clear that you speak only for yourself and not on behalf of NAP. Individual NAP members should write in the first person, and provide, as should be noted expressly by NAP, "the postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent NAP's or other NAP members' positions or opinions."
9. *NAP Monitors Members' Use of Social Media including NAP Facebook.*
NAP will regularly monitor the NAP Facebook and, responsibly and as quickly as feasible, remove materials posted there that NAP identifies as inappropriate. NAP will further impose or support the imposition of discipline or ethics violations against members who violate this policy, consistent with NAP bylaws and other authority.
10. *NAP is not a "Guarantor" of Members' Use of Social Media and NAP Facebook.*
It is the individual members themselves who are ultimately responsible for posting and utilizing NAP Social Media including the NAP Facebook properly. Therefore, NAP members will be subject to the foreseeable and unintended consequences of any inappropriate postings or use of Social Media such as NAP Facebook – not NAP, its officers, fellow NAP members, employees, representatives, agents, or other third parties.