

# TIPS ON USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY

## WHY USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY?

All Members of Congress have Twitter accounts, and most (if not all) have Facebook accounts. These accounts are monitored regularly to discover constituents' opinions and perspectives; observe conversations and trends; and learn news and information. Congressional staff are more likely to use Twitter for professional purposes than other platforms.

In a recent poll, **89% of congressional staffers report that social media posts from a leader or representative of a constituent group would have some or a lot of influence on their decision**, if directed at their Member of Congress (*Social Media Habits of Congressional Staff*, webinar from the National Journal and Congressional Management Foundation, July 30, 2019).

## GETTING STARTED



**Research:** Use the [NAFIS Action Center](#) to identify your U.S. Senators and Representative, and then visit their websites. Read up! What issues are important to them? Do they support Impact Aid? How do their interests intersect with your school district's? You can also sign up to receive their email updates.



**Connect:** Elected officials have social media accounts because they want to hear from constituents. Tweet (or send an email) to your policymakers to introduce (or reintroduce) your school district and offer resources to them and their staff.



**Follow:** Be sure to follow your Member of Congress on social media to track the issues they are prioritizing as well as upcoming events, town halls, and debates.



**Follow-up:** You probably won't get a response when you tweet at your elected officials or comment on their Facebook page, but your message still gets through. When you meet them in person or speak to them on the phone, tell them that you've been interacting with them on social media. When they can connect the messages with the people sending them, they're more likely to pay attention.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY

**Tag after meeting.** If you have an opportunity to speak with an elected official or their staff, always express your thanks publicly on social media and tag them on your channels after the meeting. Remember to restate your ask in the post!

**Use pictures.** When possible, include a photo of you with a lawmaker or their staff when you tag them in a post. You could also use photos from your school district to illustrate how you use Impact Aid funds or the NAFIS shareable graphics to deliver a strong message.

**Keep your posts focused.** Make sure each one has a clear message or requested action.

**Include the hashtag #ImpactAid and tag your Member of Congress' accounts.** This helps the people who will care most about your post to see it.

**Think globally, act locally.** Only reach out to the representatives for whom you are a constituent. Reaching out to other representatives through social media can have a negative effect.

**Balance your content.** Aim for an assortment of posts, some about Impact Aid and others about daily life in your school district.

**Make clear you are a constituent.** Policymakers care most about what the people who elect them think, but less than half of the social media posts directed to them provide enough context to determine if they are from constituents. This information doesn't need to be in the post if it is clear from your username or bio.

## TIPS FOR TWITTER

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**Research your hashtags.** Take time to find out what other people are tweeting about when they use a particular hashtag – sometimes, hashtags that seem perfect for your purpose are already in use for another cause.

**Include your Member of Congress' Twitter handles (find them here).** This ensures their account is notified of your tweet.

**Retweet strategically.** Gain attention from your elected officials by retweeting their work and amplifying their voice on Impact Aid. If appropriate, add a comment thanking them for their support or making clear that this is an important issue for your school district.

**Mention strategically.** Don't tag your elected official in more than one to two tweets per day.

**Keep the drumbeat going.** Tweets have a short shelf life. Reinforce your message over the course of weeks and months.

## TIPS FOR INSTAGRAM

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**Consider your audience.** Who are you hoping to reach? This platform is used less frequently on the Hill. Instagram could be valuable if you're creating content for students. However, it may not be the best platform for advocacy.

**Use authentic imagery.** Make sure to share photos and videos taken in your school district and community. Use the album feature to highlight a series of events and resources.

**Use locations.** Tag your post with a location, such as a city name or specific school. If your elected official uses Instagram, this makes it more likely that they discover your post.

**Tagging.** When applicable, tag your elected officials in the image to notify them and continue building the relationship.

## TIPS FOR FACEBOOK

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**Like your policymakers' pages.** Make sure you 'Like' and 'Follow' your elected officials' Facebook pages.

**Mentions and comments.** Tag your legislators' official pages in your own posts, and comment on posts that are related to your school district. Are they posting a lot about education? Help them to connect the dots to the importance of Impact Aid!

**Use photos.** Photos of your school district's work can be very powerful. Whether it's a photo of students doing a science experiment or a virtual lesson, use visuals whenever possible.

**Keep text brief.** Posts under 90 characters are four times more likely to go viral and three times more likely to receive clicks.

**Make sure your school district has a page.** Many school districts still do not have Facebook pages. Create a page and try to post something at least once a week.

## ALWAYS KNOW THE RULES

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Before you create an account or start posting on an existing account, make sure you know what content is approved for social media. Your school district likely has guidelines or restrictions about what political speech can appear on official district social media pages, and it may also have guidelines on what employees who publicly affiliate with the school district can post.

## EXAMPLES

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### Sample Tweets & Shareable Graphics