

# Using Social Media Strategically

Published: December 2024

# Overview of Social Media

# YOUR STORY VS. YOUR TOOLS



**Narrative:** The story we want to tell or the understanding we want to create

+



**Messaging:** The words we use to tell that story or create that understanding



**Tools:** The tactics and platforms you use to get your story out there

- Traditional media (print, broadcast, radio)
- Social media
- Own media (blogs, newsletter)

# Tools

## Earned Media

Press- including  
print, radio, &  
broadcast.

## Digital Media

Social media – like  
Facebook, Twitter, &  
Instagram.

## Owned Media






Owned media –  
like blogs &  
newsletters.

# What can I use digital tools for?



- **Connecting** with people – constituents, partners, other local electeds, etc.
- **Demystifying** yourself as a local elected to seem more approachable/relatable
- **Educating** the public (both about *how* local government works and about what particular policies/laws do)
- **Taking a stand** on a particular issue and **showing support and garnering support or opposition** for a policy, law, trend, etc.
- **Soliciting feedback** such as asking constituents to weigh in on something
- **Responding** to an event or issue
- **Spotlighting community events** and your participation in them
- **Amplifying** your own content – blogs, statements, press releases, events, etc. Reporters often follow elected accounts!
- **Creating a cheering squad** of external validators that can help you drum up support and show solidarity in tough moments

# Questions to consider

-  What are my goals?
-  Who is my target audience for this message?
-  How in depth do I want to or need to go?
-  How much time and support do I have to develop comms?
-  What do I feel most comfortable with?

# Digital tool we'll focus on here:



twitter

facebook



Instagram



# Social Media Platforms



# Digital Tools - Twitter

**Audience** includes reporters, other elected officials, policy wonks & advocates, **news junkies**, and particularly engaged constituents.

**Tone** can vary: casual, witty, **brief**, serious, human.

**Content** should be **timely**, responding to something, highlighting wins, sharing a news story, or flushing out a point using a “thread.” Include hashtag(s), photo(s), graphic, link, emojis, etc. whenever possible.

*More amenable to **sharing** and adding on to each others’ posts!*



# Digital Tools - Twitter/X (or similar, e.g. Blue Sky)



HOME > POLITICS

## Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez says she writes all her own tweets, and many of them 'never see the light of day'

Ocasio-Cortez credits social media with powering her rise. Since the first days of her campaign, she's used it to develop a relationship with her followers, sharpen her message, and control the media narrative.

When she launched her bid, in May 2017, she had fewer than 300 Twitter followers. Her Facebook livestreams got a few dozen likes. But by primary day, she'd grown her Twitter following to 60,000 — more than many sitting House members.

She argues that her online presence allowed her to bypass a media largely uninterested in her race and communicate directly with voters.

"It was literally just through tweeting and getting that feedback and learning through commentary and testing messages," she said. "Because every time you tweet something how it performs is basically like an A/B test."

# Digital Tools - Instagram

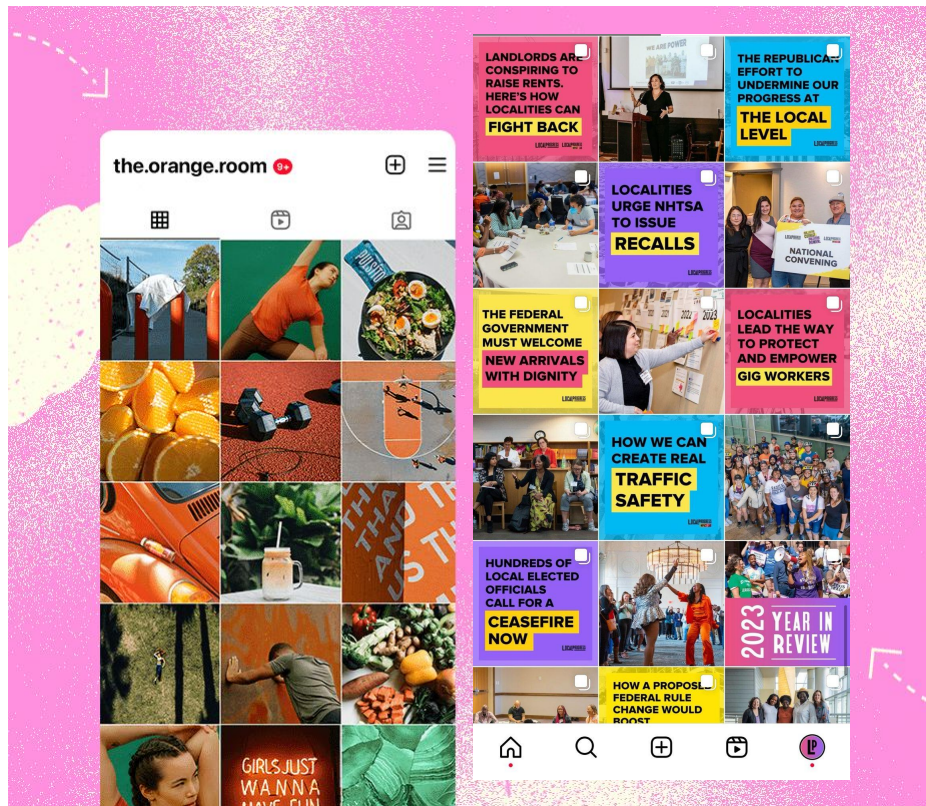


**Audience** is more **personal** – residents in your community, partner groups, and your personal network. (on the younger side)

**Tone** is personal, inviting, **friendly** – the written caption is there to support the image.

**Content** is focused on images – great for graphics, photos from site visits and community events – all about **aesthetics**.

Use hashtags, tag other accounts, and **make use of stories!**

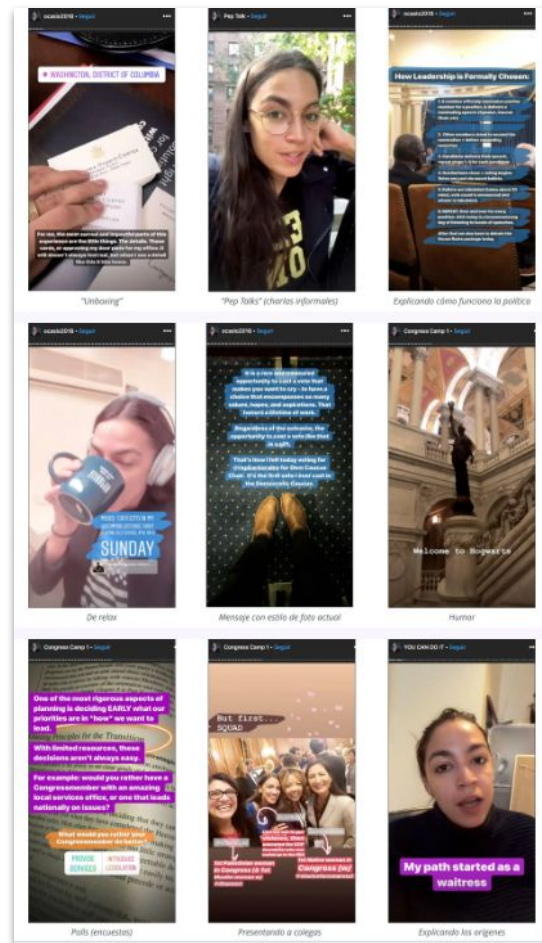


# Digital Tools - Instagram



## How Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Is Bringing Her Instagram Followers Into the Political Process

The incoming congresswoman has given her followers the type of behind-the-scenes look at congressional orientation that's not usually broadcast.





# Digital Tools - Facebook

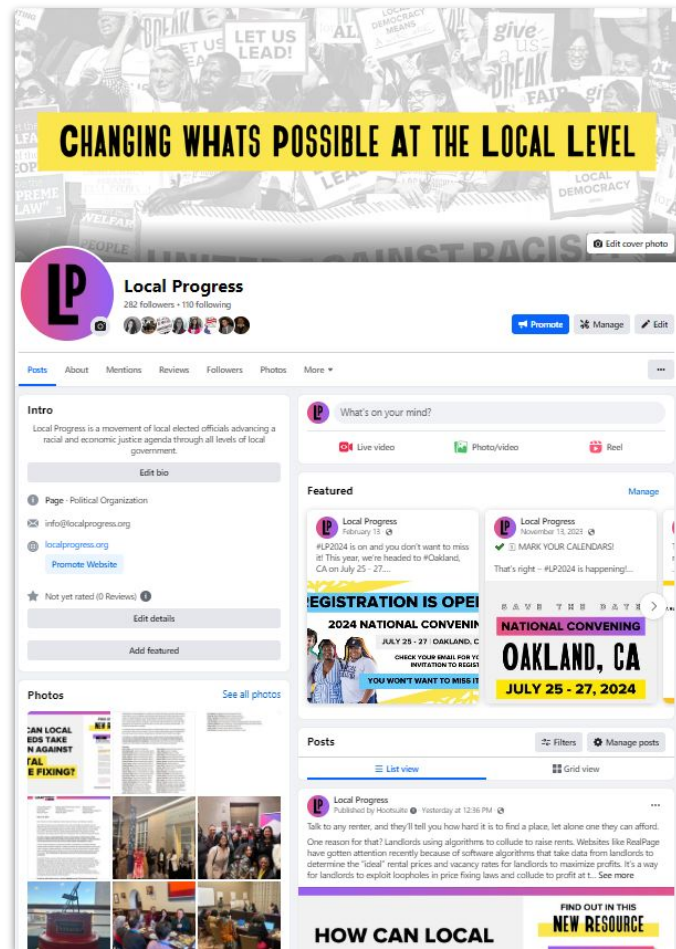


**Audience** includes **residents** in your community, partners, other local electeds. (on the older side)

**Tone** can be a bit **wordier**, yet still accessible, personal, friendly, and engaging.

**Content** is similar to Twitter, but you can post less often and provides the opportunity to **go more in depth** explaining your work or encouraging community engagement

*Make use of the opportunity to **directly engage** with constituents!*



# Tips and Tricks!



Take it slow and experiment



Spend some time just scrolling through your feed



Find accounts you like and want to emulate



Use the tools you have – you don't need to be a graphics expert!



Use data where you can and have time



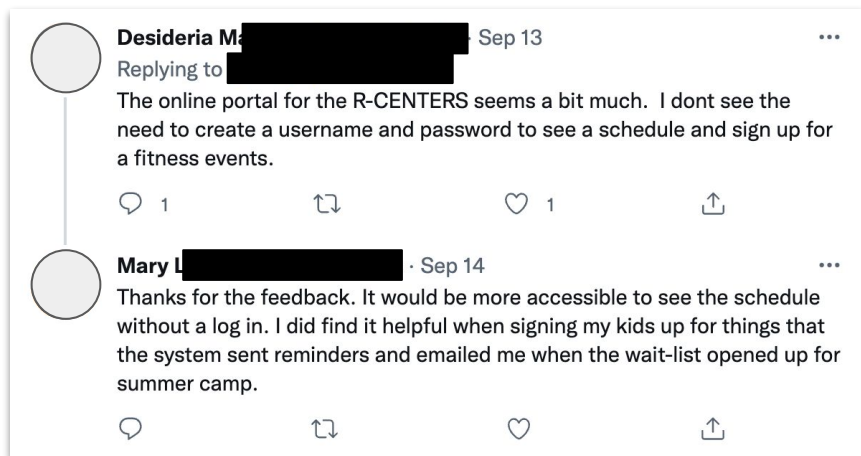
Look into scheduling software

⭐ **MAKE IT FUN** ⭐

# **Dealing with Social Media Trolls & Harassment Online**

# Feedback and engagement vs. trolling and abuse

“Your vote was highly disappointing and I don’t see how you could think that this issue won’t impact our community.”



This screenshot shows two tweets. The first tweet is from Desideria M. [redacted] dated Sep 13, replying to [redacted]. The text says: "The online portal for the R-CENTERS seems a bit much. I dont see the need to create a username and password to see a schedule and sign up for a fitness events." It has 1 reply and 1 like. The second tweet is from Mary L. [redacted] dated Sep 14, replying to [redacted]. The text says: "Thanks for the feedback. It would be more accessible to see the schedule without a log in. I did find it helpful when signing my kids up for things that the system sent reminders and emailed me when the wait-list opened up for summer camp." It has 0 replies and 0 likes.

**Desideria M.** [redacted] · Sep 13  
Replying to [redacted]  
The online portal for the R-CENTERS seems a bit much. I dont see the need to create a username and password to see a schedule and sign up for a fitness events.  
1 1

**Mary L.** [redacted] · Sep 14  
Replying to [redacted]  
Thanks for the feedback. It would be more accessible to see the schedule without a log in. I did find it helpful when signing my kids up for things that the system sent reminders and emailed me when the wait-list opened up for summer camp.

“You suck.”



This screenshot shows a tweet from Paul J. Reed [redacted] dated Sep 13, replying to [redacted]. The text says: "This is your priority right now? Wow." It has 0 replies and 0 likes.

**Paul J. Reed** [redacted]  
Replying to [redacted]  
This is your priority right now? Wow.  
9:22 PM · Sep 13, 2022 · Twitter for Android



This screenshot shows a tweet from Alma [redacted] dated Sep 11, replying to [redacted]. The text says: "Violent criminals prowl our streets thanks to Democrats' soft stance on crime. You are failing us. Planning on voting Republican across the board for the first time in my life this November." It has 6 likes.

**Alma** [redacted] · Sep 11  
Replying to [redacted]  
Violent criminals prowl our streets thanks to Democrats' soft stance on crime. You are failing us. Planning on voting Republican across the board for the first time in my life this November.  
6



This screenshot shows a tweet from chris baker [redacted] dated Sep 12, replying to [redacted]. The text says: "Mary...get your head out of your ass!" It has 1 like.

**chris baker** [redacted] · Sep 12  
Replying to [redacted]  
Mary...get your head out of your ass!  
1



# Feedback and engagement vs. trolling and abuse

**“I don’t see how you could think that this issue won’t impact our community.”**

- Usually pertains to a specific issue
- Can be emotional or tense but there’s an opportunity for conversation.
- You can identify a need or concern

**“You suck.”**

- Personal
- Does not provide insight
- May not come from people in your district or jurisdiction

# Deciding whether to respond? Consider the following:

- **Take a deep breath.** Dealing with social media trolls can be stressful and annoying. Remember that you're not alone and the voices of a loud few do not reflect all the voices in your community.
- **General rule of thumb:** Do not respond to trolls or abusive comments.
- **If you're unsure, ask yourself some questions:**
  - Are they communicating a question or concern that you need to address? Or is their comment simply personal?
  - Will responding/addressing the comment serve my goals?
  - How would you feel in the scenario in which you respond? How would you feel in the scenario in which you ignore? Which feels more like you?
- **Still unsure?** Draft out what you want to say. Walk away from 15-20 mins and come back to it.

# When trolling is out of control...

- **Revisit your cybersecurity plan** and consider services like [DeleteMe](#) that help remove your personal information off the internet. This is the best way to protect yourself from doxxing.
- **Mute the noise.** There are services like [Block Their Followers](#) and [BlockPartyApp](#) that help you filter out unwanted Twitter mentions so you can focus on staying in touch with your community.
- **Protect your accounts.** Close your DMs, lock your account, and report abusive messages via the platform. For repetitive attackers, it could also be helpful to screenshot and save them for your records.
- **Tell someone.** Dealing with trolls and swarms is taxing and overwhelming. Protect your mental and emotional capacity and reach out to folks that can help. LP is also around to support you!

# Personal Safety and Digital Security Resource

## LOCALPROGRESS

### Personal Safety & Digital Security Considerations & Resources for Local Elected Officials Updated: August 2024

#### Physical, Mental & Emotional Well-Being

Protecting your mental and physical health is top priority – because you are a wonderful human and because you need to feel stable and sustained in order to work through these moments.

**Create a self-care plan.** Be open with your family, friends, and allies and recruit them to support you. Tell them what's happening and how they can support you. This might mean asking your chosen community to keep you company at home or join them at theirs, or even asking for help with your usual caretaking responsibility. This will help wrap you in love and support so that you can deal with anxiety and dread without letting them overwhelm every part of you.

- Consider taking a break from social media or asking a friend/supporter to take on some of the digital monitoring that you might need done so you can step away.

**Document incidents & report them as needed.** Documenting can be as simple as screenshotting digital incidents (e.g. threats, harassment, doxing attempts) and putting them in the folder or creating an incident response log of in-person situations.

- Documenting serves multiple purposes. The primary purpose is that it gives you a papertrail for reporting (either to your governing body or the appropriate authorities). Secondly, for some people it allows them to better process and organize information; for others, it allows them to assess the scale of the situation and better determine a course of action.
- **Note:** Many governing bodies have protocols in place regarding safety of employees. Familiarize yourself with what the protocols are in your governing body and report the incidents to the appropriate city staff (in some cases this may be Human Resources or a designated security team).

**Evaluate public content and take a break from sharing location-identifying information.** Many electeds share updates about community engagements and their schedule. Particularly when you're evaluating threats to your physical safety, consider whether information being shared publicly (either through social media, online schedules, or digital appointment calendars) need to include information about your specific location. If that information is publicly accessible, consider removing it (temporarily or permanently) until you've evaluated potential risks. If you have your physical office, you may also want to consider temporary relocation or work-from-home arrangements for yourself and staff.

#### Digital Security

Bad actors and trolls will often attempt to access all your information and share that publicly to compromise your safety. These digital security measures can help secure your information and devices:

- **Change and strengthen all your existing passwords.** Update the passwords for all your crucial accounts using complex passwords that are not easily guessed. You can test the strength of your passwords [here](#).
- **Turn on two-factor authentication (2FA) for all your accounts.** Two-factor authentication—also known as 2FA or TOTP—is an electronic authentication method in which a computer user is granted access to a website or application only after successfully presenting two or more pieces of evidence to an authentication mechanism: knowledge (what you know), possession (what you have), and inheritance (who you are).

# How to create a cheering squad

1. Identify **values-aligned people** in your community – could be friends, advocates, family, organizers, community members, partners, neighbors colleagues, faith leaders, volunteers, etc.
2. Make a list of them!
3. Reach out to them – explain that as an elected official, it's important that you establish allies you can reach out to for public support during key moments
  - Be sure to agree on the best way to contact them quickly in such moments, and add that contact info to your list

# How to activate your cheering squad when you need them

If you feel comfortable with how your cheering squad will respond, there's no need to give them specific language / material. Just **reach out as you would naturally and ask for their support**. For ex:

- “I’m sure you’ve seen what’s been happening recently. If you wouldn’t mind posting something authentic in support of me, I would really appreciate it.”
- “Did you see that terrible piece about me? I’m wondering whether you might be down to write a LTE in response? I’d be happy to help you draft it.”
- “I just released a statement on xyz. I’d really appreciate if you could uplift it and show me some support / love.”

# What to arm your cheering squad with

**If the issue is sticky / you'd prefer to give some guidance, consider sharing some sample language:**

- Sample social media (ex: tweets)
- Talking points
- Op-Ed template
- LTE

Offer to chat with people in person, over the phone, via zoom, etc. to explain the issue in detail and share what kind of messaging you need from them.

# Examples of cheering squads & external validators:



Sami سامي  
@SamiBanatMN

Follow



So proud of the leadership of this council and my friends who led this effort. Grateful for Council President @mitrajunjalali for working hard on this, @cheniquajohnson for leading the resolution, and @HwaJeongKimSTP for helping get this across the finish line.



Kyle Stokes @kystokes · 3/6/24

**JUST IN:** In an abrupt turnaround, the St. Paul City Council has unanimously approved a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to U.S. military aid to Israel

...



erica m  
@ericamauter

Follow



**Lotta y'all owe @mitrajunjalali an apology.**



**Star Tribune** ✓ @StarTribune · 3/6/24

**UPDATE:** The symbolic statement comes after a month of pressure from pro-Palestinian activists, who packed the council chambers Wednesday for the fifth week in a row.  
[startribune.com/st-paul-city-c...](https://startribune.com/st-paul-city-c...)



# Examples of cheering squads & external validators:



Local Progress  
@LocalProgress

LP leaders and Antioch Councilmembers @WilsonME68 & @Tamisha4Antioch continue to show immense courage and unwavering leadership in the face of disturbing revelations about local law enforcement and serious concerns about the safety of Black elected officials.

We stand with them.

## IN SOLIDARITY WITH ANTIOCH COUNCILMEMBERS TAMISHA TORRES-WALKER & MONICA WILSON

Everybody deserves to be and feel safe. As a network of local elected officials, we know the real work to actualize this truth confronts the ugly - and often violent - realities of institutionalized racism and white supremacy.

Antioch Councilmembers Tamisha Torres-Walker and Monica Wilson continue to show unwavering leadership in the midst of shocking and disturbing revelations about local law enforcement.

A joint FBI and Contra Costa District Attorney's Office investigation of the Antioch Police Department revealed racist, sexist, and homophobic text messages among Antioch and Pittsburg officers. Among the countless hate filled exchanges were blatant threats to the Mayor's life. **These threats raise real concerns about the safety and wellbeing of Black elected officials that must be taken seriously.** These types of threats and personal safety concerns are an alarming and far too common experience for Black leaders and leaders of color across the country. Racist institutions like the Antioch Police Department use intimidation and threats of violence to sow fear and retain power. We will not stand by as they threaten those elected to represent and serve the people.

As this investigation continues and Antioch residents sustain a fight for a complete overhaul of a department that has failed them, we stand in solidarity with them and local leaders in the collective work to build community safety.



Mary Lupien @marylupienroc · 5/7/23  
Proud to stand in solidarity with @Tamisha4Antioch, @WilsonME68, and all those in Antioch working to create real safety.



Local Progress @LocalPro... · 5/1/23  
LP leaders and Antioch Councilmembers @WilsonME68 & @Tamisha4Antioch continue to show immense courage and unwavering leadership in the face of disturbing revelations about local law enforcement and serious concerns about the safety of Black elected officials.

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Mayor McMorin @YasmineM... · 5/1/23  
We will not be threatened or silenced. Threats and concerns of personal safety are an alarming and far-too common experience for Black women and women of color in elected office.

We stand with you, @WilsonME68 and @Tamisha4Antioch!



Local Progress @LocalPro... · 5/1/23  
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Justice McCray | they/them · 5/2/23  
We will not be threatened or silenced. Threats and concerns of personal safety are an alarming and far-too common experience for Black women and women of color in elected office.

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# Examples of cheering squads & external validators:



Last week, LP leader @willjawando exemplified immense grace and leadership in the face of extreme and intolerable hate.

We stand in solidarity with him now and throughout our ever-forward & collective work towards transformative change.



We Stand with Will Jawando & All Champions of Community Safety

Everybody deserves to be and feel safe. As a network of local elected officials, we know the real work that must be done to actualize this truth.

Councilmember Will Jawando is a champion of that work. In Montgomery County, he has fought for racial equity, for investments in real community safety like restorative justice, and for police accountability. And as a leader within Local Progress, he has supported and empowered others across the country to do the same.

Last week, we were outraged to learn that Will was targeted with racist slurs and abuse during a virtual event. It's no coincidence that this abuse comes in the wake of Will's leadership on transforming public safety and making Montgomery County a more equitable place for Black and Brown residents. This type of reprisal is a frustrating and far-too common experience for Black leaders and LP members of color across the country.

We stand with Councilmember Jawando and denounce this abuse in the strongest possible terms. Hate will never stop our work and we know it will not deter Will's either.



Rossana Rodriguez 🇵🇷 🇪🇺 🇨🇷... · 2/17/22  
Thank you for your work and courage @willjawando

Local Progress @LocalPr... · 2/17/22

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Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty... · 2/17/22  
Love for & solidarity with @willjawando. This work is hard but we're never alone. x.com/LocalProgress/...

Local Progress @LocalPr... · 2/17/22

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Councilmember Kendra Broome... · 2/17/22  
.@willjawando is a leader and a champion. Proud to stand in solidarity with him. Hate has no place in our communities.

Local Progress @LocalPr... · 2/17/22

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