

# **Maui County Council**

## **Social Media Policy**

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### **Introduction and applicability**

The Office of Council Services supports the council's legislative work and disseminates information on council business through OCS-managed social media accounts, a website, and other means.

OCS manages the following social media accounts:

- Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/MauiCountyCouncil>
- Instagram:  
<https://instagram.com/mauicountycouncil>
- YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIFP2h4o6AH26GcbUNoByeg>

OCS also manages MauiCounty.us.

OCS does not manage councilmembers' social media platforms. Each councilmember is solely responsible for the content and management of their social media platforms under this policy.

## **Maui County Council**

### **Social Media Policy**

Under the Sunshine Law, councilmembers should not post, comment on, or otherwise communicate on council business with fellow councilmembers or each other's staff members on social media, unless a permitted interaction applies.

Council staff members may comment, post, or communicate on council business with the council social media platforms, and each councilmember's social media platforms, when the staff is acting in their individual capacity, on personal time while using personal equipment, and not as a representative of the office with whom they are employed.

As used in this policy, "social media account" and "social media platform" are synonymous, unless the context and "council social media platforms" are official, OCS-managed councilmember social media accounts.

This policy is intended to ensure council social media accounts comply with the County Code of Ethics, State open-government statutes, and the United States and Hawai'i constitutions.

#### **Limited public forum**

The council's social media platforms and each councilmember's social media platforms when used for official purposes qualify as limited public forums, and members of the public have a First Amendment right to express their opinions on them.

If a platform's settings allow for user comments, users are free to post questions, comments, and concerns about council business on that platform, subject to this policy's standards of conduct.

Once a council social media platform has been enabled to receive comments, users must not be blocked based on their criticism or disagreement with a viewpoint of the council or a councilmember. Council social media accounts will not filter, hide, or delete user content unless it is inconsistent with this policy's standards of conduct.

All user comments may be disallowed or discontinued on any council social media platform at any time. OCS and councilmembers reserve the right to remove any post or comment at any time, consistent with this policy.

#### **Standards of conduct**

Content posted to a council social media platform may be removed if it falls within any of the following categories:

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- Copyrighted material.
- Commercial solicitations or inquiries.
- Electoral-campaign advocacy.
- Personal information protected by law, including a driver's license number and Social Security Number.
- Content that is threatening or includes incitement to violence.
- Profane, graphically violent, racist, or sexually explicit content.
- Solicitations to commit a crime.

#### **Social media content**

Council social media platform users should expect to see posts that serve a legislative purpose, including the following:

- Links to press releases, meeting agendas, and other announcements about council business.
- Photography and videography of council events, meetings, ceremonies, and special occasions.
- Live and archived videos of council or council committee meetings, press conferences featuring councilmembers, or interviews with councilmembers.
- Updates on council bills and resolutions.
- Information on how to submit testimony to the council and its committees.

#### **Following other accounts and liking posts**

Council social media accounts should not follow accounts from or like social media posts from commercial enterprises, content-sharing services, electoral campaigns, or political action committees. Councilmembers should avoid liking, sharing, or commenting on other councilmembers' posts in their official capacities.

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Examples of appropriate social media accounts to follow are:

- Municipalities of the State of Hawai‘i, including individual departments and divisions.
- Government agencies of the United States of America.
- Nonprofit organizations in the State of Hawai‘i.
- Legitimate media outlets and credentialed reporters.

#### **Disclaimers**

The council’s social media platforms are not monitored outside of County business hours. Users should not use the council’s social media platforms to contact or provide notice to the County about dangerous conditions or situations. If a dangerous condition or situation exists, please contact the appropriate agency, such as the police department, fire department, or water department.

Content posted by the public to a council social media platform does not constitute a request for service, legal or official notice, service of process, or a request to testify at a council or committee meeting. Content posted to a council social media platform does not supersede the County’s normal business practices or requirements under the Sunshine Law.

The council’s social media accounts’ posts may contain links to websites not owned or controlled by OCS or a councilmember. If provided by OCS or a councilmember, the links are for user convenience only. The council is not responsible for and does not endorse any links embedded in comments posted by users.

The council is not responsible for any advertisements or other content provided on “related” and “promoted” videos accessible from a council social media platform. The appearance of an advertisement or “related” and “promoted” content accessible from a council social media platform does not reflect a council endorsement, opinion, position, or policy.

By posting content on a council social media platform, users agree they have no expectation of privacy in the information provided and acknowledge their posting is subject to disclosure under the Uniform Information Practices Act.

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Comments or content posted by the public on a council social media platform are the opinion and sole responsibility of the person or entity posting the content. Publication of a comment does not imply the council or any councilmember endorses the content or that the content reflects the opinions or policies of the council or any councilmember.

A link to this social media policy should be provided on all council social media platforms. This social media policy may be revised at any time without notice.

#### **Copyright**

The council retains the copyright to all text, graphic images, videography, photography, and other content produced by and posted to OCS-managed social media platforms.

Users of the council's social media platforms may view, share, link to, or distribute information found on the platforms for non-commercial purposes. The council makes no warranty that information on council social media platforms is free of copyright claims or other restrictions on free use. Commercial use of content found on the council's social media platforms is prohibited.

#### **Direct or private messages**

Direct or private messages sent to or by council social media accounts may be considered government records, subject to public disclosure.

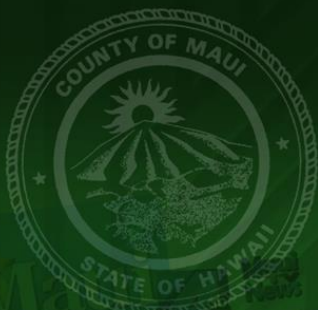
#### **Approved:**



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ALICE L. LEE  
Council Chair  
April 9, 2025

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## COMMUNICATION PLAN

*Timely, accurate, comprehensive  
information on Maui County's  
legislative process.*





## **OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES**

The Office of Council Services provides professional services to the council chair, the councilmembers and their individual offices and the council’s residency area offices. In the county’s legislative process, the role of OCS is to staff the council’s committees and provide objective assistance to individual councilmembers.

## **COMMUNICATION GOALS**

### *FOR OUR COMMUNITY*

To educate, engage and provide transparency in Maui County’s legislative process.

### *FOR OUR COUNCILMEMBERS*

To provide communication tools, resources, support and content representing the best interests of the council legally, professionally and ethically.

## **COMMUNICATION MISSION**

To provide timely, accurate and comprehensive information in a consistent and professional manner, on key issues, policy decisions and actions taken by the Maui County Council and its committees.

## **TOPICS:**

- 1. Communications principles**
- 2. Website: MauiCounty.us**
- 3. Information portal: Granicus**
- 4. Press releases**
- 5. Opinion columns**
- 6. Letters to the editor**
- 7. Mass mailings**
- 8. Social media**
- 9. Media interviews**
- 10. Translations**



### **1. Communications principles**

The communication plan aligns public information activities with the vision and mission of the Office of Council Services (“OCS”). The plan provides strategies, guidelines and procedures to follow when providing information to target audiences through OCS.

The plan helps enhance public awareness of the Maui County Council’s legislative work and identifies ways to remove barriers of misinformation and misconceptions about government. Communication from OCS encourages citizens to connect with councilmembers and get involved in the legislative process.

The plan may be assessed and updated at any time, under the council chair’s direction. The use of communication tools always raises questions under open-government laws and the Code of Ethics. So, we



are always assessing our practices to ensure legal and ethical compliance.



Ethics: OCS staff time, MauiCounty.us and the council's social media tools are public resources that may only be used for public, informational purposes.

## 2. Website: MauiCounty.us

MauiCounty.us is the official online news and information website for the Maui County Council. The site includes agendas, press releases, councilmember pages and other relevant information to the legislative work of the council and its standing committees. All content posted on MauiCounty.us requires OCS review.



The website is powered by a content-management system called WordPress and features a responsive layout to allow users to view the site on a variety of devices. MauiCounty.us is intended to complement content already provided on the administration-maintained mauicounty.gov website. The council's other social media tools—including Facebook, Instagram and Youtube)—help make the public aware of content on MauiCounty.us.

Each councilmember's page consists of standardized information, including their official photo, residency area, committee leadership, office staff and contact information. If councilmembers would like to share additional council-related information, they should please contact OCS Communications Specialist for support.



**Request an update**

Requests to update any page on MauiCounty.us may be sent to the Communications Specialist and may be subject to review by OCS.



**Policies to upload new content to councilmember pages on Mauicounty.us**

1. The following content is appropriate and may be uploaded:
  - a. Informational community flyers related to the council's work.
  - b. Press releases posted to our "News and Media" tab.
  - c. Opinion columns.
  - d. Links to committee meeting recordings and related presentations and documents.
2. Please avoid the following content:
  - a. Matters that relate to election campaigning.
  - b. Press releases and opinion pieces that were not reviewed by OCS.

**3. Information portal: Granicus**

Granicus is an online legislative-content system designed to make government records and public-meeting videos easily accessible for the community. It provides access to legislative documents, meeting videos, minutes and other related public documents. Access is via the council's website:

### **[MauiCounty.us/agendas](https://mauicounty.us/agendas)**

The public may review the same content as councilmembers, subscribe to email notifications and watch live and archived meeting broadcasts via the website, helping to ensure transparency and community awareness.

## **4. Press releases**

### **Policies:**

- Requests for OCS assistance to draft and issue press releases should be limited to matters approved by the council or committees.
- Committee chairs may issue press releases for matters approved by their committee.
- Council chair may issue press releases for matters approved by the council.
- PAF requests for OCS assistance must be submitted at least two days before the press release is issued.

The office's priorities are to issue documents that are factual, accurate and relevant by the agreed deadline.

### **OCS press release basics:**

- *PAF required.*
- *No more than two pages.*

- *Each paragraph is no more than two sentences.*
- *Accompanied by up to two photos.*
- *Format:*
  - *First paragraph tells almost the whole story in one sentence: Who, what, where, when, why.*
  - *Second paragraph: Two sentences providing more facts, with attribution.*
  - *Third paragraph: Direct quote of no more than two sentences.*
  - *Remaining paragraphs: More facts; more direct quotes of up to four sentences.*

### **OCS style tips based on AP style:**

1. *Press release titles: Avoid using the entire committee or councilmember’s name in the headline. Instead, use “Committee” or the councilmember’s last name. Keep the title as concise as possible. The lead paragraph will provide the opportunity to include the proper names.*
2. *Organization names: When using acronyms, spell out the full name the first time it is mentioned, then use the acronym afterward. There is no need to put the acronyms in parentheses and quotation marks. Example: *The Hawai’i State Association of Counties (“HSAC”) issued a statement. HSAC representatives attended the ball.**
3. *When mentioning names of organizations, it is OK to drop the Inc., LLC or Co. Example: *Use MEDB versus MEDB, Inc.**
4. *Titles: Use lowercase for titles such as mayor, director, and coordinator, unless immediately preceded by the name. Example: *The school invited Mayor Smith. They offered treats to the mayor.**

5. Capitalization: Capitalize sparingly. Only capitalize “council” or “committee” when used as part of the proper name. Examples: capitalize “Maui County Council,” “County Council” or “Budget and Finance Committee,” but lowercase references to council or committee.
6. Abbreviate titles when part of a title such as Gov. instead of Governor and Rep. for Representative.
7. Dates and times: Abbreviate long months like Oct., Nov., and Dec. when used as part of a date. Use “9:30 a.m.” and “10 p.m.,” not “9:30 AM” and “10:00 PM.”
8. Links: When adding links, refrain from adding links with complicated characters. Write MauiCounty.us by capitalizing “M” and “C.” If necessary, request a custom redirect link from staff. Example: *Learn more online at MauiCounty.us/Bill59.*
9. Spell out numerals one to nine.
10. Hyphen: Do not hyphenate adverbs ending in “ly.”
11. If the dateline says “WAILUKU, Hawai‘i—,” there is no need to again say that the meeting is in Wailuku.
12. Quotation marks: If a quote is divided in two paragraphs, do not add an end quote after the first paragraph. Example:

*“This bill fulfills a goal established four years ago,” Smith said. “It contains standards and restrictions to preserve the character of the neighborhood.”*

*“Clearly defining our laws will give communities greater guidance and improve enforcement.”*

## **Facts and opinions**

Every opinion in a release must be attributed to a source. Here's an example.

QUESTIONABLE:

The bill will help eliminate obstacles for Upcountry residents on the water meter list.

BETTER:

The committee chair said the bill will help eliminate obstacles for Upcountry residents on the water meter list.

A credible media outlet will usually confirm or get more information from the councilmember via phone call.

## **5. Opinion columns**

An opinion column or “op-ed piece,” usually written in first-person perspective, can be an effective communication tool to frame issues and messages exactly the way the writer prefers.

An op-ed piece is less rigid than a press release, but claims must always be supported with facts. If OCS is involved, the tone must be professional and objective.

Councilmembers are free to directly contact a newspaper of choice and submit articles, forgoing the OCS-review process.

If councilmembers would like to request OCS assistance, a PAF must be issued and the column

should be sent to the Communications Specialist seven days before submission.

## 6. Letters to the editor

This widely read newspaper section should be reserved to address specific items that demand a direct response. This platform allows members to clarify an issue or provide additional context in a concise manner.

## 7. Mass mailings

Whether it's a postcard, a tri-fold brochure or a handout, mass-mailing service may be requested in a form of a PAF after getting approval from the council chair. The PAF will determine guidelines for the project, which may include:

- Procurement:  
Who will pay for the printing and mailing?
- Mailing-list approval:  
Is the list a specific target demographic? How is the list acquired? Will there be an unfair disadvantage to others who will not receive the material?
- Timeline and other resources



## 8. Social media

Social media use is intended to increase government transparency, engagement and efficiency by disseminating information relating to the council's work in venues that are popular with the general public.



### **Checklist: What are the guidelines to share articles or posts from outside entities to the Maui County Council's official social media pages?**

1. Post should cover key issues, policy decisions and actions being taken by the Maui County Council.
2. Timely, accurate and comprehensive information is being provided in a consistent and professional manner.
3. Sharing the post would enhance public awareness of the council's legislative work.
4. The post avoids efforts to spread misinformation or misconceptions about county government.

The council chair will issue a social media policy.

## 9. Media interviews.

The Communications Specialist is available to field and vet media requests for councilmember interviews. Assistance with preparing for, sitting in on and



following up with media interviews may also be provided.

### **10. Translation requests.**

The Hawaiian Language Communications Specialist is available to translate official documents upon councilmember requests and with OCS approval. For committee agendas, the English version of the agenda must be approved by the councilmember before proceeding with translation. To ensure adequate time to translate, the approved agenda must be sent to the Hawaiian Language Communications Specialist three days prior to the day of posting. For any specific questions or special inquiries, please contact the Hawaiian Language Communications Specialist directly.

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***Prepared by:***

Office of Council Services, March 2023

Updated April 2025

