



(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn how to use social networking sites of Facebook and Twitter and contact elected officials to gather information.

MATERIALS

| Computer/Internet Access | "Contacting Elected Officials" handout |
|---|---|
| "Contacting Elected Officials" worksheet | |

GET READY

- ✓ Gain access to computers or a computer lab to allow students to access the necessary web sites
- Make copies of the Contacting Elected Officials handout and worksheet for each student.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Hand out copies of the Contacting Elected Officials handout and worksheet for each student or group.
- ✓ Discuss the importance of communicating with elected officials, and have students brainstorm appropriate topics to discuss with an elected official.
- ✓ Discuss the handout as a class, ensuring that all students understand the procedures for contacting elected officials via both Facebook and Twitter. Demonstrations might be helpful to ensure all understand.
- ✓ Have students access the USA.gov web site found in the Additional Resources section. Then instruct students to choose an elected

- official from the list that they would like to contact. Students can choose officials at either the national level or state level. Remind the students that they are more likely to get responses from local or state officials.
- ✓ Once students have chosen officials to contact, have them fill out the Contacting Elected Officials worksheet.
- ✓ Once the worksheet has been checked over, have students search for their elected official on Facebook and/or Twitter.
- Students may then contact their chosen official using the method described on the handout.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ Why is it important that we share our opinions with elected officials?
- ★ What other ways can we use to contact our elected officials?
- ★ How can we get others to contact our elected officials when they have concerns or questions?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ★ Contact Elected Officials: The Official United States Government web page: http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml
- ★ Official Facebook web site: http://www.facebook.com/
- ★ Official Twitter web site: http://www.twitter.com/
- ★ 2gov Civic Participation Made Easy: http://2gov.org/



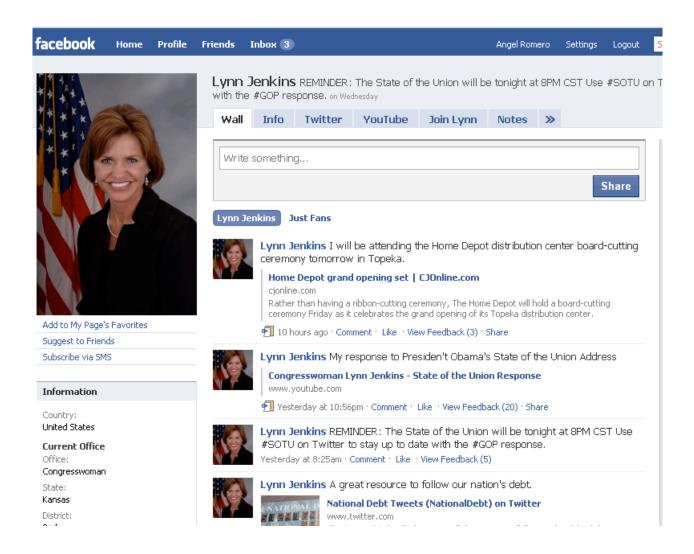
Today's technology allows us to be more connected to our elected government officials than ever before. Use of social networking web sites has become an easy and popular way to make your opinion known to the elected officials representing you. The following sections describe how you can use both Facebook and Twitter to get involved in the democratic process.

Facebook is a social networking site that allows people from all over the world to connect with one another. It also allows users to share personal information, photographs, and links to their friends. Because of this, Facebook has become an excellent source for connecting with elected officials whether in your home towns or Washington, D.C. To find and communicate with an elected official on Facebook, you must have a user account. Once you have an official Facebook account, follow the directions below to find the representative you are looking for:

- ★ Log in to your Facebook account.
- ★ On the home page, click in the search box located at the upper right hand corner of
- ★ Type in the name of the elected official you are looking for. Be sure to use the correct spelling, or your search might not work properly.
- ★ Your search should come up with many entries. Generally speaking, the official you are looking for should have some sort of official photo, and be listed under "Pages", not "People". Additionally, you may be able to find their official web page listed at the bottom of the page under "Web Results".
- ★ You may use the "Comment" feature on the Wall to contact the official, or use the information listed under the "Info" tab to contact the official. Many times there will be other web sites, e-mail addresses, or postal addresses that can be used as well.
- ★ See the following example of an elected official's Facebook page.

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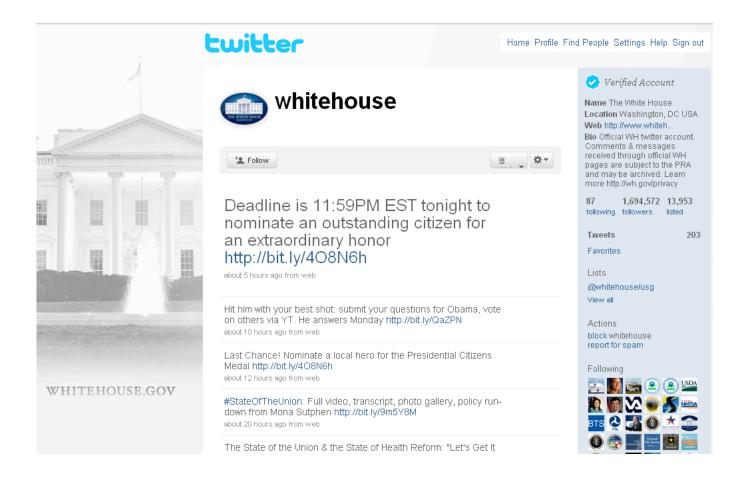
Twitter is a social networking and microblogging web site that allows its users to write short messages (called "tweets") visible to friends, family, and even the public in general. When used by government officials, Twitter is a convenient way to communicate a constant stream of brief updates on what is currently happening in the United States government. To communicate with officials on Twitter, you must have an official Twitter account. Once you have an account, follow the directions below to contact an elected official:

- ★ Log in to your Twitter account.
- ★ In the upper right hand corner of the home page, click "Find People". In the "Find on Twitter" tab you may type in the name of the official you are looking for. Alternatively, you may click on the "Browse Suggestions" tab, select "Politics" from the left hand side of the screen, and scroll through the list to find who you are looking for. Look especially for accounts labeled "Verified" (with a blue checkmark), as these are usernames that the people at Twitter have verified are real and not imposters.
- ★ Click on "Follow" to receive updates on the official's Twitter account, or click on their username to see a history of their recent tweets.
- ★ You may send a public tweet or respond to a tweet made by a specific official by typing @ and the official's username without any spaces. This message will go specifically to that official so they can see it right away. For example, to send a tweet to President Barack Obama, you would type @BarackObama in your message. Replying to a tweet is a quick and easy way for elected officials to see how you feel about a topic.
- ★ For an easy way to contact any elected official without signing up for a Twitter account, visit http://2gov.org/. This web site allows anyone to type a short message to a particular official using either your e-mail address or your Twitter account. By typing in your zip code, it also gives you a list of your local, federal, state, and legislative officials.
- ★ See the following example of a Twitter page.



Contacting Elected Officials (continued)

Contacting Elected Officials



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Contacting Elected Officials Worksheet

Three elected officials I am interested in contacting are:

| Name | Position |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Name | Position |
| Name | Position |
| | se two topics (These can be anything of interest to you, including hat you see on television, or what affects your family): |
| Topic 1 | |
| | |
| , | to say, including any comments or questions you have: |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Once you are finished, have your tead | cher check your comments, and then use the handout to |

Once you are finished, have your teacher check your comments, and then use the handout to communicate your comments and questions to the elected official you have chosen through either Facebook or Twitter.