**United States Election Assistance Commission**
**Roundtable Discussion**
**Voting Goes Viral: Using New Media to Manage an Election &**
**Communicate with Voters**

1225 New York Avenue, NW

Suite 150

Washington, DC  20005

Friday, June 17, 2011

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

The following is the verbatim transcript of the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Roundtable Discussion Voting Goes Viral: Using New Media to Manage an Election & Communicate with Voters held on Friday, June 17, 2011.  The roundtable convened at 9:01 a.m., EDT and was adjourned at 4:46 p.m., EDT.

## **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

MS. LAYSON:

Good morning and welcome to the EAC's roundtable about social media and elections, Voting Goes Viral: Using New Media to Manage an Election & Communicate with Voters.  I want to thank Commissioners Donnetta Davidson and Gineen Bresso, and Executive Director Tom Wilkey for their support and leadership on this important issue.  And also, thank you to Emily Jones, who does all of the work to make sure that these meetings go well.  Thank you very much to her.

We're having this discussion because we know that the public is increasingly relying on each other for information.  We aren't waiting for the evening news or for radio news to give us information.  And the same is true about elections; we're sharing information with each other.  We are the newswire now.

At the EAC, we have observed numerous election officials embrace social media to update voters in the news media about a variety of issues, including polling place hours, wait times, and closures.  Douglas County, Kansas, used Twitter during a local election to inform voters of a polling place closure due to a fire.  News outlets saw the feed and broadcast the news within minutes.  Broward County, Florida, and Forsyth County, Georgia, posted early voting wait times on their website so people could avoid lines.

Counties also used mobile phone text messaging to coordinate Election Day activities with poll workers.

And the bottom line is that social media is here to stay. And it offers numerous sources to the public about how, where and when to vote. And we want to make sure that voters have a credible resource about voting that they can trust. And I'm talking about the basics; deadlines, requirements, and polling place locations. Social media can be a scary place. The atmosphere is pithy and sometimes cruel, but at the end of the day, we have to provide information to the public where they are, and they are on Twitter and Facebook. And so, today we will talk about social media and who uses it. We heard from election officials about their successes and their failures. And journalists will tell us how they use social media as a reporting tool.

Thank you for joining us. We're at hashtag bready2012, that's the letter "b" ready2012 or you can submit comments via the webcast, which is available at eac.gov.

Our moderator, Merle King, will get us started. Merle is from The Center for Election Systems at Kennesaw University in Georgia. Merle, it's all yours.

DR. KING:

Thank you, Jeannie. It's my pleasure to be here today. And I'll echo Jeannie's thanks to the EAC for hosting this, and to the Commissioners who've had the vision to see this as one more aspect of election administration in the upcoming 2012 election cycle.

I'd like to go over a few things about the roundtable this morning, and kind of give the participants a sense of the structure, and then, also for those of us who are joining on the webcast, so you have a better understanding of our timetable.

Throughout the morning we have several hard breaks that are built into the roundtable, and that's, in part, to accommodate transcription and some other logistical issues. So, I think we have an agenda that says our first session goes until 10:30, but I'm going to do my very best to wind up that first session at that time. And the same will be true throughout the day, at lunch.

One of the things that will be unusual about this roundtable, for me, is that normally I ask people to turn off all the technology so that we can focus on the face-to-face interchange, but obviously, today is different. And so, we recognize that many of you will be engaged with your Twitter accounts and other aspects of communicating with your constituencies. So, all we ask is that you put it on as silent as possible, and be aware that if you are using a Wi-Fi device it may kickback through the microphones.

You'll notice that there are two microphones throughout the table setup. One is for the room amplification and the webcast, and the other is for our transcription service. You won't need to turn on or move any of the mics. They should be in good position. So feel free to participate. And we do ask each member of the roundtable to feel free to engage on each of these topics that we have organized throughout the day.

There will be a presenter for each of the sections, that will open it up. And before we get to that point, I'd like to ask each

4

member of the roundtable to give a brief introduction of themselves, for their colleagues. And I'm going to start, Brian, with you, and we'll move around the table.

MR. NEWBY:

Sure. Well, hi, I'm Brian Newby. I'm Johnson County, Kansas, Election Commissioner. I've been there for about six-and-a-half years, after working for about 20 years at Sprint. And so, I really didn't think there would be the combination of phones and elections as much as there have been. When I started I thought there would be a little, but I think that's become even more evident since I've been here. But, glad to be here and it looks like a terrific event.

DR. KING:

Thank you.

MS. CHISNELL:

I'm Dana Chisnell. I'm an independent researcher working in usability and studying the voting experience, done a lot of work on ballot design, but also, in my other life worked on social media. So, I think my main claim to fame is knowing the first two people who proposed to each other on Twitter.

[Laughter]

DR. KING:

Jeannie and I have already introduced ourselves.

MR. RAINIE:

I'm Lee Rainie. I run the PEW Research Center's Internet and American Life Project which is a non-profit fact tank. We have no agenda driving our work, but we do primary research, particularly a lot of surveys, about how people use technologies, first, starting

with the Internet, but now, increasingly cell phones, smartphones, tablets, and things like that.

DR. KING:

Thank you.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

My name is Martin Austermuhle.  I'm the Senior Editor at dcs.com.  It's a website that covers politics and events in the District of Columbia.  I also started a website that specifically covered a special election that the District just had on April 26th and it was meant to aggregate information, events, you know, social media and things like that, specifically about that one election which was for an at large position on the D.C. Council.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Good morning, my name is Chris Chambless.  I'm the Clay County Supervisor of Elections, Clay County, Florida.  We have been using social networking and the Internet, in general, for a number of years.  I have been with the office for 14 years.  We have a high number of military members in our county, as well as UOCAVA voters, so we've really embraced those types of technologies to assist us reaching them.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you.  And we may have one other panelist joining us later today, and at that time I'll ask that he introduce himself.

Whenever I speak with election officials, around the country, one of the things that I always open with is reminding them that they are all information technology managers, whether they want to be, whether they think they are, whether they were trained to be,

it's the reality of administering elections in the current environment. And today's roundtable, really takes us into, in my mind, a different place in the management of IT, in regards of being engaged with the use of technology over which the election administrator has limited control. And that's different for election administrators. We normally think about marshalling our resources towards specific goals, specific timetables. And so, the notion of being engaged in a process that we have more of a participation role, rather than a control and a gatekeeper role, is unusual. And yet, I think what we will see in the 2012 cycle and beyond, this will become one more reality for election officials. And those who get on the wave will experience benefits. Those who get washed by the wave will have one more thing to struggle with, in terms of keeping up and catching up.

Journalists and election officials have some shared responsibilities and shared interests. One is accuracy, making sure that the facts are presented. The other is timeliness. And the aspect of social media with its acceleration of time and the notion of compressing decision-making and information dissemination into a timetable that is really beyond our prior experience, I think, is one of the most daunting challenges that we face as election administrators.

So, to that end, again, I'd like to remind the viewers that we have available, at www.eac.gov a roundtable link that will take you to the EAC's Twitter page, or to an online form, in which you can submit questions throughout the broadcast. And we'll do our best

to review those questions, and if time permits we will respond to those throughout the day.

So, we have one more person who has arrived this morning. And welcome, and if you would give a brief introduction.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Alysoun McLaughlin. I'm the public affairs manager for the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics.

DR. KING:

Okay, welcome Alysoun. Glad to have you here.

With that then, I'd like to ask our first presentation, Lee Rainie. Lee, if you would take the microphone, and welcome, and thank you for your offer to open up the session with your presentation.

MR. RAINIE:

Thanks. One of the really cool things about my job is that I get cold e-mails from people like Jeannie inviting me to events like this. This is an important contribution that PEW hopes that research like ours will make, and so, they were thrilled that I was invited here to present the work of the PEW Internet project.

We've been in business for 11 years, doing surveys and other kinds of research about how people use technology. We've seen three revolutions unfold on our watch. The first is the Internet broadband revolution. 79 percent of Americans now use the Internet. Two-thirds of them have broadband connections at home, some of the fastest deploying technologies in the history of consumer adoption of electronic gear. There are still people who don't have the Internet. About a fifth of American adults don't have

it, and about a third of American adults don't have broadband at home.  So there are divides to think about and to accommodate as you are thinking about your roles, as your roles have just gotten harder in this life now, where you have a big constituency that hopes you'll do the good jobs that you've been doing from time immemorial and serving people those ways.  But there are also new constituencies who have new expectations about how you will communicate with them and pass along information to them.

The second revolution that we've seen is the wireless revolution.  About 57 percent, so more than half of American adults now connect to the Internet wirelessly, either through a smartphone or through a laptop computer with a WiFi or a WiMAX computer.  Wireless connectivity has increased the importance of real time information to people.  They can walk around with their social networks in their pockets, and their information source is in their pockets, and they increasingly expect that people will communicate with them through those devices.

The third revolution we've seen is the technological social networking revolution.  It's different from social networks that have been increasingly important in people's lives for about a century, but the rise of things like first Friendster, and then MySpace, and then Facebook, and LinkedIn, is an important part of the story about how networks have become more important as ways that people communicate with each other, share information, tell each other stories.

So, three revolutions; Internet, wireless, and social networking.  And it's changed the media ecology.  Now, about two

thirds of American adults, three-quarters of American teenagers are content creators. They're in the same business that those traditional journalists that you used to deal with a generation ago, were the gatekeepers of information and sharing, now it's people who are their own broadcasters and their publishers. And that's changed a lot the way that they expect to interact with public officials, interact with the voting process.

So, with that as background, I thought I'd walk through some -- quickly some of the data that we collect, every year after Election Day. We run a survey for about a month asking people a variety of questions about their use of technology, and I thought I'd share with you the most recent information and some relevant trends about what we've picked up about how people use the Internet, increasingly cell phones and social networks, to get election information and get political information and things like that.

The story is always the same. Each election cycle brings bigger and different uses of technology. There is variance depending on whether it's a Presidential election year, or an off-year election. There's always, sort of, a drop off in a variety of activities that takes place in off=year elections, just because people aren't quite as engaged with politics, but still, in all, if you compare like to like, if you compare Presidential years to Presidential years, and off years to off years, all the trajectories are up, and new technologies are brought into the process, as people engage it.

We ask a question about the primary sources of information that people use to get political and election news, and since -- in the 2010 election, which was an off-year election, we see that for all

Americans in our data, now the Internet is close to as important as newspapers are.  It's still way behind TV.  TV is still the primary source for political news and information for all Americans, but if you look at the Internet users in this cohort, and especially if you look at the broadband users in this cohort, the Internet, now, is more important than newspapers, and is closing in on television as a primary source of information.

Now, when I say that, there's a potential for people to think that the Internet is a special place separate and apart from mainstream space, but it's not.  In the big story of the media -- news media ecology, especially during the 2000's, was the merger of mainstream media and the Internet.  All major reputable news organizations have an online presence.  So, when people say they're using the Internet for information about stuff, it might be, and often is the case, that they're getting information from newspaper websites or TV websites or official websites.  You know, by saying, "I use the Internet as a primary source of information," they're not necessarily saying, "I'm going to alternative sources, or sources that aren't part of the mainstream culture," because these worlds have now so thoroughly blended together, that people, when they say they're using the Internet, are often using very traditional sources, but just in a slightly new platform.

We also see, you know, the rise, year to year to year, of the number of people who are using the Internet for political and election information.  In 2002, about 40 percent of Internet users got political news and informatio,n online.  58 percent of Americans got -- or Internet users got it in 2010.  We expect, in 2012, the

11

numbers will yet go up, more in part because mainstream news sources are now relying on the Internet to pass out information, but the story is, sort of, ever upward.  And people are now, almost by default, especially when they have broadband at home, when they have questions about what's going on in the news, or where can I vote, or what's -- what are the candidate positions, or what are the bond issues on stuff, if you're a broadband user at home, your default thing is to go search for it online, you know.  It's not necessarily to wade through back issues of newspapers, or, you know, try to remember what you heard on TV.  The Internet is a go-to source, now, for primary information about getting election news and finding out what's going on in elections.

People have concerns, though, about the rise of the Internet. They love it for themselves.  They think it serves their needs in lots of different ways, but they worry about how other people use the Internet for election news.  So, we asked a series of questions after the last election, about how, generally, the Internet was used for people, and we found that, you know, there's a good and bad story. More than half of people said that the Internet makes it easier for them to connect with others who share their views, politically.  For most people, that's a good thing, you know.  They like hanging out with folks who share their stories, share their sense of what's going on in the election.  But they also worry that other people who hang out in communities of likeminded people will listen to the extreme voices in those communities.  So, it's okay for me, but about, you know, my neighbor, I'm worried about where, you know, he might be getting information and whether extremists or sort of

spinmeisters are promoting it. We also see that a lot of people like the Internet because it makes available a wider diversity of news sources, but it also has become such a full information environment that people worry, and say, for themselves, it's harder to find the truth now when they do searches and when they -- when they see political information online, there's just so much of it, that it's hard for them to work their way through to the facts that matter to them, and the facts that are relevant. So, it's a double-edged proposition when people use these new technologies in an environment where lots more information is coming at us, a lot more quickly, as Merle was saying.

Okay, so there are some other themes that came out in our data after the 2010 election. The social media picture, itself, flipped. In 2008, it was very much a Democratic story, and, you know, the pinnacle of it was how the Obama Administration -- the Obama campaign was using social media in new ways to attract voters, to mobilize supporters. Particularly among the young, it was a very -- it was a source that was hospitable to them and it was an interesting new way for them to share information. So, in some respects, social media, and we're talking here about a variety of things, social networking itself. So, Facebook is the preeminent social networking site, but also LinkedIn and MySpace. And we're talking about blogging. About 14 percent of Americans are bloggers themselves, and a lot of people read blogs. They're having a harder time figuring out what is a blog, because blogging pages sometimes look just like great, you know, well put together media pages, I'm sure Martin's pages, you know, it's hard to tell the

difference between what you're doing and what, you know, more institutional sources are doing.

And so -- and the third thing is Twitter. And I probably should say that Facebook is far and away the most important thing. About 40 percent of Americans -- all Americans use Twitter, about half of Americans use social networking sites, only 13 percent use Twitter. So, there's a big difference in the way that people use these sites and their utility to them, and so, a lot of these data are only talking about those populations. So, it's important to understand their relative proportions.

In 2008, though -- so the social media space was Democratic, and Obama dominated. In 2010, Republicans caught up. There was a lot of energy in the Tea Party movement. There was -- the Republicans had just become much more adept and comfortable using social media; Twitter, Facebook, and things like that. So, that story is embodied in the little, cute slide that I have behind me.

But, about 35 percent of social networking site users, 21 percent of all adults, used these sites for political reasons in 2010. It's a bigger number than actually existed in 2008. So, social media is now weaving itself into the day-to-day rhythms of politics and news and things like that. We have some data, here, about the kinds of things, the kinds of information and sharing of information that people used. They were discovering who their friends voted for. I mean, one of the new things we saw on Election Day 2010 and in the pre-election voting that's increasingly common now, people announced on their Facebook pages, "I voted today and

here's who I voted for." And it's a very interesting cohort of people because they don't want to, you know, be quiet and silent about who their votes are. They want to announce it to the world. And one of the things you see in social networking literature is that the more people who are aware of others in their networks, who are participants in politics and who have particularly political passions, the more likely it is that they themselves will be involved in politics and potentially share those passions. So, this awareness of who is in our network and what they're doing is a very different dynamic from a lot of times where people would only talk about politics, you know, in the quiet of their homes or, you know, in places where it wasn't necessarily going to be broadcast to the world.

And they also use social network sites to get candidate information. They oftentimes use them to post information; just generally, a comment, or share links about something that was going on with a candidate in their domain. About a tenth of social networking sites users friended a candidate. Candidates, now, very commonly have their own Facebook pages and people feel comfortable friending them. They've set up pages or they've joined political causes through their social networking sites. About ten percent do that. And a bunch of people start their own groups. One of the striking things we see throughout, sort of, community growth online is that people go hunting for groups and others who share their passions, whatever they are, hobbies, or lifestyles, and some cases politics. If they don't find a group that seems quite compatible or hospitable to them, they'll form their own group. One of the things about being a content creator, now, is the

participatory angle of this.  And you can just throw up a page and say, "Hey, come join me," or "Here's what I think," you know.  Facebook, especially, is just, you know, full of groups that have come into being because somebody on the spur of the moment decided, "Hey, I'm mad at this," or "I really like this," and they're off to the races.  About 28 percent of Twitter users use Twitter politically, and there's more of our data in there.

One of the things that people get out of social media is they feel more connected to the things that are part of the political process.  They think that they have sort of a little tie to the candidate or to the party, and that's a personal connection that matters more to them, rather than just receiving direct mail or receiving messaging.  They are interacting with the campaign.  They like the idea that they might actually be the first to know about things.  One of the common ways that the political community now uses social media, including texting on telephones, is to just announce what's going to happen.  And the mainstream media aren't the first to know, necessarily, and so, there's a way to sort of say, "If you really want to -- if you care about politics and you really want to be in the know, sign up and be a friend of the page," or "Sign up for our Twitter fee or our texting service, and we'll let you be the first on your block to be -- to know."  And also, people like social networking services because they say it's more reliable than getting it from traditional news organizations.  There still is a very distinct feeling among Internet users and social media users, in particular, that the mainstream media don't necessarily give them

all that they want or need, or the way they want it.  And so, the Internet still is a sort of special privileged place for doing that.

And, social networking spaces are interesting, because it's still the case that more young people are in those spaces doing political things than older people.  But, if you're over age 50, which is the fastest growing cohort of social media users, new people coming online, once you're in that space, you're just as likely to be doing all of the things I just described as younger people.  So, there's a way that people sort of see this as a new element of political life, that if they're in it, they like it, no matter what their age.  And as I said, the Republican cohort, the people who are interested in the party, use social media as much, as aggressively, as interestedly as Democrats did in 2010, which is a big change from the story that we saw in 2008.

Let's see, why don't I go to mobile politics, just to quickly wrap this up here.  About a quarter of adults used their cell phones for political purposes in 2010.  They used their cell phones to tell people who they voted, about 14 percent did that.  They like to keep up with the news as they are traveling around.  They don't necessarily have to wait to be on a wired device or certainly wait for the top of the hour to get the newscast, they like that they can get it on their mobile devices.  They're texting related to politics, you know.  Most everybody who has a mobile phone now is a texter.  About 80 percent of people who own cell phones now use texting services, in part because that's the only way you can talk to kids these days, right?  It's just, you know, they don't answer e-mail.  They hardly answer their phone anymore, so texting is pretty much

-- if you've got a kid in your life, this is the way you do it.  Six percent -- particularly relevant to this group here, six percent use their cell phones to let others know about conditions at their voting stations on Election Day, 4 percent use their phones to monitor results of the election as they occurred, 3 percent use their phones to shoot pictures.  I mean, these are now content creation devices.  You can shoot pictures and videos and post them up online, and about 3 percent of cell phone users did that.  One of the big things that comes into being in the mobile environment is apps.  It's not real prominent yet in the political world, but I'm sure these numbers will be considerably higher in 2012, in part because I expect that the leading-edge people in the elections administration community are going to be thinking, how do we build an app, or how do we buy into apps, related to this.  Mobile stuff, unlike social networking stuff, is still the province of the young.  They're more likely to do it than the old, in all of those features.

So, that's the story that we captured at the end of 2010, and I'm thrilled to have shared it with you.  Thanks.

DR. KING:

Well, thank you Lee.  That is an awesome collection of eye-opening facts for one of those over 50 social network users.

I wanted to make sure that I wrote down one number as correct, and that was, I think it was 13 percent of the population are Twitter users, and 40 percent use Facebook?

MR. RAINIE:

Yes, 13 percent are Internet users. And actually, it's more than half of Internet users use Facebook, but 40 percent of the entire population.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MR. RAINIE:

And about half the population, overall, Internet and non-Internet, use social networking sites of one kind or another.

DR. KING:

Okay. Well, I have a question that I'd like to get Chris and Lee involved in, and it was one of the last things that you talked about; that in the election community, we're very aware of the demographic issues of the voters in our jurisdictions. And certainly, I'll presume, in Florida, they skew towards the over 50 group. That may not be true in other jurisdictions, but you said that, and I'm paraphrasing, that once older social – once older social media users enter into that sphere, they often adopt the same behaviors as younger users that are in that space already. And I can't remember if you used the term, with the same aggressiveness, or the same assertiveness, but it was one of those two adjectives. Most election officials are controversy adverse, and we avoid aggressiveness for a variety of reasons. And certainly, in Florida, election officials are elected which has another ramification for their conduct in these media space. But, I was intrigued by that term "aggressiveness," because that's not normally how election officials think about distributing information. We may be assertive, we may

be proactive, but I've not heard us described as aggressive. And I

wonder if you could reflect on that, and then Chris, your reflection.

MR. RAINIE:

I meant to use that word in the sense that they are fully embracing

of the space. They're not hesitant about sharing information,

posting stories on whatever the subject is. Often, they've been

encouraged online by younger family members who say, "Do you

want to see pictures of me? Join face Facebook, and I'll show

them to you," but it's that they are -- these are spaces that are

relatively easy to use and are compelling to people. Once they

become sort of accustomed to the idea of content creation and

sharing their stories, they are very comfortable in doing so. And, I

would think that for election administration officials, one of the core

discomforts that creates is, of course, that they are -- there's this

whole group of folks out there that are commenting about you, and

the conditions that you care about, and the circumstances that

you're trying to, you know, make hospitable to them. And so, you

know, you just can see in many more respects the conversations

that they're having about how well you're doing your job, and how

well the conditions are.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

I think that once, long ago, that elections officials were somewhat

shying away from social networking or the Internet, digital

revolution, as a whole. And, in the beginning 14 years ago, when I

came on with the elections office as the IT person, I was somewhat

of an enigma. Of course, that is kind of changing, and a lot of the

elections administration, elections officials are embracing social networking.

We use social networking with regards to YouTube to Facebook to Twitter to Flicker in a number of different ways, whether it is to reach out to individuals who would like to volunteer in the elections office or to become a poll worker. We actually use YouTube as an initial test for the individuals to learn what exactly it means to be a poll worker, for that, and then to take an online test as the initial baseline of their interest and capabilities for that.

I think that the Internet and social media, in general, allows us to be proactive in developing the relationships with the media. I often use the phrase, "We do not come to the prom to learn how to dance." We reach out to the media in our county and in our surrounding areas. We develop those relationships, so when there is some sort of a buzz around something that took place, whether at a polling location, or early voting site, they would say, "You know what? That really doesn't sound like Chris. That really doesn't sound like the elections office. Let me go out and check into this a little bit more before you would rush out to judgment and post something to the contrary." So, I think that it allows us to be proactive and to help the media in their jobs. Long ago there were multiple staff members at a paper or at a news organization and each one did their own specific job. And now, there's the one person that edits the video, that reports the story, and does it all, writes the story. And so, anything that we can do, such as, in all of our press releases, we provide links to Flicker for all of the camera ready photographs and various different resolutions that they can

21

use, along with that story, and be proactive, to feed the media, if you will.

DR. KING:

Okay, very good. Alysoun, do you have a comment?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

In our case, we were implementing a whole lot of different kinds of changes, in this last election cycle, so we were certainly in a position where we needed to be aggressive about getting information out.

I think, generally speaking, the concerns that I hear from other elections officials about using social media, about using Twitter, in particular, is really sort of a bias question. It's a worry. Certainly, there's an element of familiarity with the tool themselves. Certainly, most election officials aren't necessarily in the sort of early adopter demographic of some of these tools, although I think there's certainly a lot more comfort level in use, now, of Facebook.

But I think the concern is more, "Well, if only two percent are using Twitter, then are we disproportionately getting our information out to those voters, as opposed to the voters who are using the more traditional, you know, weekly newspapers, or who are watching TV." Now, in our case, we overcome that largely because I don't -- while we use Twitter as a voter communications tool, we use it more as a tool for communicating with the news media, and as a tool for communicating with candidates, and so, that's a very different type of presence in a space. And I'm sure we'll talk about some of that more later, in later panels. But I think that's really where the hesitation I hear from other election officials is, "Well,

wait, we're just going to be talking to those younger voters.  Then, that will be a channel that won't be reflective of our overall population, so we have to use the more conservative, put full page ads in the newspaper, reach out through TV, to get our word out."

DR. KING:

Okay.  So, a part of it's certainly the economics, the bang for the buck, where you can get the most return for the investment of your time and effort.

But, I think I heard you say one other thing that intrigues me, and that is, as Lee pointed out, much of the activity related to elections is really about partisan activities.  It's not about election administration and how the election official's message survives and thrives in the clutter of that space, if you will.  And, I think there's an unsureness on the part of election officials about, is that an appropriate space for us to be, where our tweets about the pragmatic mechanical aspects of an election are interspersed in a recipient's fall, dealing with the politics, et cetera.  Is that a concern?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

And if you're not there, then the misinformation spreads.  So, it's a wonderful opportunity to respond and engage when the conversation starts to go down the wrong road, about what people think your policies and procedures are.  It gives you a great learning opportunity.

DR. KING:

Okay, Brian, any observations about...

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I think a couple of things there, to one point, about if you're only communicating with one segment. A bigger question is to what end are you communicating in the first place? Because one of the things we're facing a lot, budget issues, and being told a lot to focus on what we are legislatively required to do. And so, while there is a small sub segment of election junkies who might think it's cool that I drive around and say, "Hey there's three people in line at this polling place and four people in line at this polling place," other people might wonder, is that really what we have you here to do? You know, maybe -- if you're talking -- complaining about resources, maybe you should do some work, instead of driving around and looking at polling places. And so, I think some of that is, to what end are you really doing all this for? And I think that is very important throughout the whole day to talk about, what is the main objective.

And I think that is the central thing, in terms of what I think, is just really what is our overall objective of anything we're doing.

DR. KING:

Okay, yeah, that is -- it's interesting to try to second guess how those activities are perceived, and may not always be perceived as adding value to the process.

Okay, well, I have a list of questions that I'd like to kind of throw out and get your input on. And the first is, to what extent do you think the use of social media impacted voter behavior in the 2010 cycle, that we recently finished? And perhaps, if you wanted to speculate how it may impact in the 2011, and many of us are engaged in municipal elections in the 2011 cycle, but even beyond

in 2012.  But, let's first start with what we've seen, or what we know to be true in the 2010 cycle.  And I think you intimated that there was an early adopter of the Democratic Party in the 2008 cycle, followed by a shift to the Tea Party-Conservative Republican groups in the 2010.

And I'd like to start Dana, with you, and then, kind of work around the table on that particular question.  I'll give Lee the last word on that question.

MS. CHISNELL:

Well, I think in 2010, social media was very much an early adopter thing, but now, Twitter generates headlines on the morning breakfast television shows.  And so, it's not as if voters are unfamiliar with the idea.  I wonder how Facebook and Twitter impacted those voters in 2010, but I know that of people who were online, it gave everybody a place to talk.  It gave everybody a place to gather information.  It was a virtual town hall, in a lot of ways, where people could meet who wouldn't normally meet, geographically, and have discussions, have conversations that couldn't have happened otherwise, you know.  A conference call just is not going to do it, but you could have a thread going on Twitter for days and days, or on somebody's wall in Facebook over the course of a week, where people are commenting and carrying on a conversation.  I think probably that will continue to go on,in an even higher state of awareness.  People will actually tune into those places rather than taking it passively.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you.  Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

I think everything accelerates behavior, so I don't know that it truly impacted voting. But, you know, one of the questions is, did it impact behavior. And I think it did. If somebody was more likely to be upset about an issue, it became an issue, a big issue faster. And so, YouTube, I really do believe has been the social media thing that has had the biggest impact on voting so far. And I think now you'll see more, in terms of text messaging, some of that stuff is really driven around the candidate as opposed to driving behavior from an administrator standpoint.

I just, really, think that though the familiarity with all of these things is going to increase. And so, in 2008, we had something where you could go to what's called a "short code." If you go USA Today, on every section of the paper it has a five digit code, you can type Derik Jeeter and see what he did last night, you know, that he was two for five with a homerun, or whatever. And that short code, we created, where you could type VOTEKS, and then your address, and it would come back with your polling place. Well, in 2008, the idea of a short code, it was something we really had a hard time even explaining. In 2010, it was kind of like, "Oh yeah, yeah, I've seen this a million times. I see what you're doing." And it was almost, you know, the familiarity of stuff like that happens so fast. So, I think it's almost hard for us, right now, to even know where it will be in 2012, because it, even though it's a year away, that's light years where things will happen. And so, I think all of these things that we're talking about, something is going to emerge that maybe we're not seeing as the key thing in 2012.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you.  Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I don't know how it affected voter behavior at the end of the day, as far as motivating people to go to the polls who wouldn't have, or motivating voters' choices.  It's clearly affected where voters get their information, and how they get their information, and when they get their information.  And so, I'm sure there's an element of that, in the moment, real time, the word of mouth ability, to kind of get the word out to your networks that, "Hey, there's an election today", is today, you know, in a more, sort of, readily word of mouth way on Facebook than, you know, from going door to door to door down the street and dropping literature.  And so, I think that kind of communication has certainly, you know, changed dramatically. But, I really – I don't know how at, the end of the day, that really affects voter behavior.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you.  Chris?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

I would echo those remarks.  What I think that the role for social networking in our jurisdiction did, is, it made availability of the news. It also made -- grew the knowledge of other resources.  For example, individuals could go online, could register to vote at our website, could request an absentee ballot, could track that absentee ballot through the process, which was very important for our military and UOCAVA citizens, with regards to where it was in the process of being mailed to that UOCAVA voter, or being

returned and ultimately canvassed by the canvassing board. With regards to early voting, 58 percent of those who cast their ballots did so prior to Election Day. So, it was to get the news out as for what the locations -- where the locations were, what the status of those locations because, of course, with it being a very rural area in Clay County, we have early voting sites that are, maybe in a population of only a couple of thousand voters, to other early voting sites that would have tens of thousands of voters, for those. So, being able to show what the process and where it was available for them.

And I believe that as the social networking grows and makes the voter more aware of the resources, whether it's the candidate financial paperwork, to where they want to go and check and see where that candidate has spent that money, and who that candidate is receiving funds from, making that information readily available to them, is, in the end of the day, in our jurisdiction, the value that social networking brings.

DR. KING:

Okay, I'd like to follow-up on a question with Chris by coming back to something that Dana said at the very beginning of this question, and it deals with, in the diffusion of technology one of the first stages is penetration and the burden of communicating the how to, the benefits, all of that goes on to the early adopters. But then, as it proliferates and matures, then you begin to get the synergistic effects.

And you mentioned the online voter application is now an expectation. Do you have a sense of a chicken and an egg issue

there, that by embracing YouTube and Flicker for your

dissemination, you're creating an environment that not only

facilitates social media interaction, but may also then make it easier

for those users to fulfill their other expectations through online voter

applications, for example?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Again, as Alysoun remarked, I believe that it's not just social

networking, but it's all of those other assets that you use in concert

to ultimately bring that apathetic voter into the polls on Election

Day, and to be able to provide as many resources to combat that

apprehension of taking part in the process.

We had a new voting system in 2010, where we went from a

long -- we've always had optical scan, but we went from one voting

system to another, so we created the, "Are you filled in.com"

website for that, to where individuals could learn more about the

new voting method.  Then, of course, we tweeted with that,

Facebook, YouTube videos on the instruction on how to use the

machine in concert to bring about that -- to bring that voter into the

polling location.

DR. KING:

Thank you.  Martin?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Well, just back to the original question.  I think what happened

locally, in the District of Columbia, over the last six months, in two

elections that we had, which was the mayoral election in

November, and then, the special election in April, shows that as

much or more people are active on Twitter, and I think a lot of

election junkies and people who are activists, people who are on, or for certain campaigns, they're very active on Twitter and Facebook. I don't know that it's affected voter behavior just yet, because, in the mayoral election, Mayor Fenty who was running for reelection, in theory, his base -- I'm generalizing here -- but his base was this younger group of District residents that are more likely to be on Twitter and use it as a means of communication. Now, he lost. Of course, you could also argue that he didn't actually use Twitter himself. His campaign was actually pretty bad about social engagement -- online social engagement, whereas, Mayor Gray, who won, was very good at it. But again, you know, you see a guy who, in theory, should have had the benefit losing out.

And then, in the special election, the turnout was nine percent, which wasn't as bad as it has been for special elections in the District, but isn't nearly as good as it has been either. But there was, you know, there was a lot of Twitter conversation going on, but it didn't translate into turnout. And I think that shows that, sure, people could be active on Twitter, and the numbers might be growing, more people might be interacting online, but that still hasn't replaced the traditional means that politicians do use, especially, locally, in a city like the District of Columbia. I mean, tourist groups, community groups,, that type of stuff, plays a much bigger role, I think, in driving turnout and shaping people's opinions, than if you're on Twitter and you're kind of jumping into a conversation that's happening online. But that's just -- again, this is just the District of Columbia. I know it can change on a State level, a county level, and nationally.

DR. KING:

Right, yeah, that's surprising, because I was going to comment on the District must be one of the most wired places in the United States, so you would think that the heavy use of social media would impact turnout, but your preliminary data, at least, says that was not the case.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Well, again, I think this is somewhat -- you know, watching as an outsider. I think if anybody did a study, they could probably -- they'd be able to quantify exactly, you know, if new voters are getting the majority of information on Twitter and that's motivating them to go out and vote, fantastic. But, I still think we're a -- it's a little early in the process, and Alysoun can probably, you know, say it differently but I think…

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah, I don't know, or Lee, I don't know if you've got any numbers on, you know, how prevalent use of Twitter is in different States or cities but -- or Facebook, or whatever else. I would assume that that would be the case; that we would have a somewhat more wired populous than in some other places, but maybe less than other places, as well.

But I do think that -- I think Martin's got it, you know, right on, that the -- I think it's early for it to have such widespread use. I mean, we've got, I think, 972 Twitter followers, so that's a pretty small percentage of the voters in D.C. Now, it happens to be, you know, near full, all but a handful of local reporters are on Twitter, and all but a handful of the candidates are on Twitter. So, again,

that's who we're really reaching, is, the intermediaries to the voters, and so, I think that sort of intermediary communication -- the speed with which I can get information out to the voters through the other channels that they're used to getting information from, has sped up. I'm not necessarily reaching the voters more directly through that channel, or very many of the voters more directly, but I'm not -- it's not as slow a process to get the information out in a 24/7 kind of a news cycle through those other sources of news that the voters are getting. So, they are getting information faster because of social media, even if they're not directly accessing it.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

And just one other thing I wanted to add. I think this speaks to the -- I mean, I think we all admit the Twitter and Facebook and all these services are great because they open up a universe that we might not otherwise have had. I mean, it makes communication that much easier. But we're human, so I think we tend to isolate ourselves in our own little echo chambers. We find people that think like us and we talk to them. But the danger of Twitter is that you don't think that you're stuck in an echo chamber. You don't think you're stuck -- you're surrounded by the same type of people, but you end up being surrounded by people who think a lot like you. So, you get a tendency to think that, you know, if you support a candidate how can -- hundreds of thousands of other people across the city must support the candidate, too, obviously, because all my friends on Twitter support it, so obviously, it seems like that that would follow. But I think, you know, that shows that there is amazing benefits to what these networks can do, but we also have

to recognize that it's -- you're not always engaging to the extent that you think you're engaging.

DR. KING:

That's a very profound statement. Lee?

MR. RAINIE:

The larger social science-type findings and reputational and trust readings that we're getting on the broad culture show that over time people are trusting less in major institutions of all kinds. Everything has gone down, except really to trust in the military, in this millennium. And they're shifting trusts to networks, you know. Their friends are the ones who help them navigate this increasingly complicated world, where they're feeling less good about major institutions.

So I think the way Alysoun describes it really feels right to me. In one respect, we know people are getting information from multiple platforms. On an average day, a basic American news consumer -- a majority of American news consumers are using between two and five different platforms. So, they're listening to the radio sometime through the day, they're reading a newspaper other times through the day, they're surfing the Web at some times of the day. It's not a question of either/or. So thinking that you can, you know, gravitate only to one potential platform is the wrong thing to do. You have to meet people where they are, and that's on multiple platforms in multiple ways. But what really was striking to me about Alysoun's description is that you're reaching influencers through their networks, and they are propagating your information. So, it's not necessarily how many followers you have, it's the size of

their networks and the size of the networks of those networks.  So, it's a useful thing to do, even though you might feel like you're only reaching a very small cohort of people.

On the larger question of how does it impact voting turnout itself, there isn't any evidence yet, starting in our work in 2000, and then, going through all the other elections, that it's bringing new kinds of people to elections.  The people who are new coming voters to elections often are encouraged to do so by the use of the Internet and specifically social networking and stuff.  But they look like voters, generally.  They tend to be more upscale.  They tend to be more educated.  They tend to be more involved in politics.  They tend to be more partisan, which is always a big driver of interests in politics.  And that's always been so.

So, it doesn't look, yet, like these new technologies are bringing brand new people to the polls, except in 2008, and in social networking spaces, in particular.  And, we don't know whether this is an Obama effect, or a young people effect, or a technology effect.  Something was going on there, though, where new kinds of people were engaging in these new platforms, in new ways, and translating it into all kinds of civic activities, but particularly to voting.  And it was a more diverse population, not just racially and ethnically, although that was true too, but it was more diverse for socioeconomic strata.  There were more people who were not necessarily better off, and not necessarily highly educated who were using these spaces to do civic things.  And it was the one good news story from a sort of Democratic mobilization and Democratic activities perspective that we were seeing in 2008.  It

wasn't so much the case in 2010, and we'll just have to see what's going to happen in 2012.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. The next question I'd like to focus, really, on something that Chris introduced, which was, that they find YouTube to be a very effective way, given what it is, that they want to communicate to prospective poll workers and to existing election workers within the jurisdiction, in terms of procedures, as well as training new voters to new technologies. And all of us who are election officials, certainly, have experience in our own jurisdiction, but we do talk with our colleagues, and we have a sense, beyond what's happening in our own jurisdiction. So, I want the election officials to kind of think with a big hat, a little bit, so, not only respond about your jurisdiction, but your experience of colleagues.

Which of the social media that we've discussed today, or other brands that are out there, would be most effective in communicating the interests and the content that election officials are primarily concerned with, if the election officials who may be following this today on the webcast are attempting to develop a priority list, because we know that many of them will be new users, new adopters and we know that resources, time being the most critical is short, what advice could you give them about the media that is the most effective? And I'd like to kind of go in the same pattern if we could, and Dana start with you.

MS. CHISNELL:

Well, I want to remind everyone that e-mail is also social networking. It seems kind of old school when you're talking about

Twitter and Facebook, but a lot of people have e-mail addresses, and they will give you their e-mail address to get information about voting and elections, about who's filing and what's on the ballot. So, don't forget about e-mail. I mean, it can have a huge, huge impact that way. Your website is crucially important. When I did a little crowd source survey on Twitter the other day about how people who follow me get information about elections, including, where to vote, and what the results are, three quarters of them said, "I go to my city or county clerk, or my election department website." So, having -- I live in Andover, Massachusetts. I think the website for the town clerk looks like it was designed and built in about 1997, but it works. It has everything that's needed there. You can find out everything you need to know. It's not flashy. You don't have to get, you know, -- it doesn't have to be beautiful, but it really works. Content is the important thing. That's what people are going for.

So, those are two things that I remind people, "Don't give up on those. They're really important." And then, consider what resources you have to go beyond that. And, I'll let the election officials talk about that.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I think those were great comments, though, because e-mail is the proverbial killer app that everybody always talked about. Everybody uses e-mail. Websites are important. And so, I think it comes back to something I said earlier, in terms of having a

strategy, communication strategy. And the important thing, for me, is not to get so far spread out, you're dabbling in everything. So, you should have a communications focus, and you should know what tool you want to use to hit that.

And, I think that if you asked that question, say, two years ago, I think a typical reaction would be, "Well, it's important you just get out there and start doing stuff. Get a -- just start tweeting. Just start -- put up a Facebook page." I think that punk rock approach, a couple of years ago, is not the same thing anymore, you know. I think now if you look back even at the punk rock thing where people didn't play their instruments, didn't know how to do it, then it became a little more refined and they called it new wave. Same kind of thing, but it started to have an image. And so, I think we're in the new wave era of social media, that it's no wave, now. I mean, you can't now just pick up your guitar and play. You have to be familiar with the stuff, be familiar with the tools, but you really have to back up and say, "What is the overall approach?" And then, "What is going to be the most effective?" And specifically, platforms, and so, one thing I'm sure we'll talk about later are applications, you know, mobile applications. As an example, we're focused on developing our own iPad application, and we hear all the time about how Android is going to be bigger than Apple and all that, but to us, we really want to pick one thing. We don't have very many arrows in our quiver to go at, because we don't have that many resources, so we want to be very sure that the things we do are going to be reaching the right people.

And so, I think it always will come back to what your overall strategy, making sure your components are linked to that. To me, that is the number one thing. And if that means you never tweet, that may be okay, you know. I mean, I think it's really what is important to get the word out.

DR. KING:

Okay, I want to -- that's an excellent observation, that social media needs to be considered within the context of an overall communication strategy.

But I want to plant a seed with you and come back a little bit later and ask about what are the risks that are associated with not adopting that strategy, that is, to not have a communication strategy and immerse yourself, as you so aptly put it, in a punk rock strategy of thrashing into Twitter and Facebook. So, I want to hold that question for now, but I want to start that with you when we come back, because you planted a great seed I think for future discussion.

Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Well, I'm going to speak up for the punk rock approach. I think that you really can't know what the potential is for these tools in your own community unless you check them out. That doesn't mean that you do need to go thrashing around and, you know, tweeting pictures of your cats or something. But it does mean that you need to -- if you want to even begin thinking about whether it's a useful tool for you, then you need to, you know, create yourself one, and at least listen and monitor and see what other people are doing in

the space. And that's certainly how I started. I never -- I didn't sit down and write a communication strategy that, "Here's how we're going to use Twitter" before I ever started exploring the space and seeing what its potential was. I stumbled into it, and I stumbled into creating a foursquare account too, and a Facebook page, too. I mean, we began playing with all of them and ultimately it reached a point where we decided we really wanted to make a strategy out of using Twitter, but we didn't see a strategy, yet, in using some of those other sites that we've now begun to evolve a little bit more into.

I do want to come back to Dana's point, though, which I think is really the fundamental one. It is so easy to start talking about the new, exciting kinds of tools, and how you can play with them, and do neat things with them, but if you don't have the basics, sort of, solid and together -- the basics are the hard part. The basics are also just necessary though. It's a lot harder for me to get e-mail addresses for voters than it is for me to start tweeting. But, it's also -- there would be a whole lot more value -- we just began last year collecting an e-mail address from voters on our voter registration form whom we never collected it before. We've collected very few so far, a few thousand really. That's going to take time and it's going to take concentrated effort, but the number of people that we can reach that way is many, many, many times more than we're going to be able to reach directly with Twitter.

MR. RAINIE:

Do you invite it from your website, just, people can contribute?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

They can contribute to…

MR. RAINIE:

Can give you their e-mail address.  Is that allowed through other platforms?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Only linked to an update of their voter registration on which, you know, our record of who they are to begin with that we would know what we wanted to communicate with them on, or if they want to sign up to receive our news releases or our announcement of election results.  So, we have those two groups of people that we have collected e-mail addresses for.

MR. NEWBY:

Can I say one thing before we go around?  I think that where I would differentiate on the punk rock thing is that I agree everybody -- I think you need to be familiar with these things.  I think it's -- what Alysoun said is right.  I think getting a Twitter account, getting a foursquare account, getting these things so you understand how people are using it, very much so, that's good.  But my argument would be that, Facebook, is a great example, has evolved so fast. And if you think about several years ago, it was okay for a business just to have a website.  And then pretty soon you'd go to a website and you'd go, "That's pretty amateurish."  And I think Facebook is becoming like that, too.  And so, if you just put something out there to put something out there, I think you run the risk of looking like you don't get it, more so, than you would if you just didn't do it at all. So, I agree about getting familiar with all the tools, but I just don't

think that having a presence anymore is enough.  And that was

really my point.

DR. KING:

Yeah, I would say that practice in the bedroom, get your skills

down, then move to the garage band, and then, move onto your

first venue.

MS. CHISNELL:

I wasn't sure where you were going with that.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Yeah, I was worried there for a minute.

[Laughter]

DR. KING:

It is Twitter, after all.

I did want to say that there is something really important,

Dana, in what you pointed out initially, and that is, the website for

all of its boredom, now, I guess, it's kind of an old school presence,

it is still a critical piece, and it has some attributes that social media

does not.  And one of them is the persistence of information on that

website and the burden of maintenance to it.  And I think one of the

things that we see with those '97 websites, they often have high

functionality, which is great, but there may be a currency issue with

some of the information on it.

MS. CHISNELL:

Well, in a town like Andover, not a lot happens either, so -- but

that's true.  You do have to think about currency when you are

working in the social web.  But, you also have to look at when

people are online.  Twitter, for example, you can tweet something in

the morning and no one will get it, because nobody is actually on, right?  So, there are, kind of, news cycles in Twitter, people are starting to study this.  For example, it seems like a lot of people, who are dedicated Twitters, are online when they come back from lunch, and in the early evenings.  And so, it's a thing that they check when they come back and sit down at the desk, and they're getting ready to then go, check their e-mail, you know.  So, you might think about tweeting the same message multiple times a day, because you're going to hit different people who are paying attention at different times of the day, that kind of thing.

So, that has to be part of your strategy.  Is this a thing that you actually want to use as a channel, whereas, you can have the same kind of news on the website and it's completely self-served, right?  It's there persistently and can be cycled out into an archive.  So, then you're into having a content strategy as well as a communication strategy.  And those things all meld together at some point.  But…

DR. KING:

I think Alysoun had a comment, and then, onto Chris.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah, I don't want to hold up the progress around the table, but I think the key thing there, to me, is that you've only got 140 characters on Twitter.  Most websites have a whole lot more than 140 characters on them.  And so, with the Twitter -- what the tweet serves, is the purpose of letting the people who are on Twitter know, "Hey, you know, we have this resource that's on our website

and it's been on our website," but now, it's in the forefront of your

thoughts and so, here you go, here's the link.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah, you can definitely use Twitter and Facebook to drive people

to your website, and those links then also spread out among the

people who are connected to the Twitter person who, you know,

found it to begin with.  So...

MS. LAYSON:

That's exactly what the EAC is doing.  We are in a new -- we have

a new Twitter account, relatively new, but that's basically how we

use it, as well, to drive people back to the website, to remind them

of the resources that we have, but also, to join that election official

community, to make sure that we're sharing information with

election officials, to make sure that we know what information they

have available and to try and create an election official community

on Twitter.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you, Jeannie.  Chris?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Well, I'd be remiss if I didn't commend Brian for drawing the parallel

from elections to punk rock.  I think that's going to have to be one of

the keynotes of the day.

[Laughter]

MR. CHAMBLESS:

For Clay County, as being in Jacksonville, Florida's, media market

and Duval County being the gorilla in our jurisdiction, for us, it's a

fight for that media space.  And so, we utilize a number of tools.

One is constant contact.  Of course, with trying to cut costs and getting that relevant news out as quickly as possible, so it's timely, and also in a very cost effective way, individuals can come to our website and signup for newsletters and press releases for that purpose.

Another innovation I would say with regards to, in a broader scale, for elections, is search engines, Google, and being able to find that relevant information very quickly, especially in the format of a site search within your own site, and having that application on your site so, you know, of course no matter -- it's always that constant struggle in a menu to find out what's going to be your top level menu item and where that information is going to be below that, but by putting that site search capability, for an individual, to place in a key word and find all things relative to absentee.  Given the fact that, again, Clay County, it's a UOCAVA military town with Jacksonville Naval Air Station, Mayport, Camp Blanding, and all of those areas and individuals being largely deployed, is being able to keep them abreast, as well as all of the other stakeholders, to your point, and again, to reach out and try to get as much saturation of that relevant news for that.  So, that's really in our area, on the impact that it's made for an elections official.

DR. KING:

Okay, if I could follow-up with a question, Chris.  I can tell from your responses that you are -- your deep into this; you guys have a lot of experience.  Would you characterize it as more evolutionary, that as you began to experiment, you adopted the things that appeared to work, and you discarded the things that didn't?  Or was it more

along what Brian has talked about, as part of a kind of an overall preformed strategy that you went out and selected technologies, and then executed the plan?

MR. CHAMBELESS:

Well, it depends on whether or not that the technology worked. Of course, you know, initially we entered in with a certain idea as to what we wanted to achieve, and we have, you know, discarded the things that weren't relevant or that weren't successful. And we've embraced and grown some of the areas that were even more. It's not necessarily to replace. With regards to YouTube, and using that tool as a -- for training of poll workers, it's not to replace that eye-to-eye, that face-to-face training environment. It's so, "Hey, when you're at home and you're e-mailing the grandkids, hop onto our site, jump off of our site to the YouTube site and revisit those training modules for that with new equipment," with the fact that we're throwing more and more technological equipment and processes to these individuals, and providing additional training, you know, during the night, just to augment what we're already putting out there.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Martin?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

I just want to jump in on the conversation about whether you go to the punk rock approach or the more strategic approach.

[Laughter]

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

And I'd say, I fall somewhere in the middle, because I agree that it becomes painfully obvious, especially to the younger generation of Twitter users and Facebook users, when someone jumps on the service but doesn't really know what they're doing about it, but jump on solely because, you know, they've read an article or they saw that, "Well, everybody is on Twitter, so I should jump on Twitter too." It becomes really, kind of, you can't hide the fact that you don't know what you're doing. And there are certain institutions within the District's government that it's -- you know, I don't want to be rude about it, but it's somewhat pathetically clear that they got a Twitter account, but they have no clear what they're going to do with it. And the Alcohol Board is a good example. They got a Twitter account, but no one can figure out why the Alcohol Board needs a Twitter account.

[Laughter]

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Now, the Board of Elections and Ethics, I think, you know, even though, Alysoun, you said that you kind of came into it without really strategizing ahead of time, I think you've established a good pattern of what you want to use it for, whether it's directing links back to the site or, you know, kind of updating people as things are happening, telling them where polling places have changed and things like that, that's great. But, you know, I think the -- if you're going to do it, you have to do it well, or you have to be ready for it. You can't just jump in because someone else said so.

And one other thing that I think is interesting. Obviously, you know, using Twitter and Facebook to send out links and to direct

people back to your website is one thing that's great and good, but I think what makes the use of Twitter so successful when it's used by government institutions, and what I've seen here in the District, is like when you actually get responses.  Like when the institution, when the person running the account will respond directly to citizen concerns.  I say, with elections, this is the key -- this is a good example where someone would say, "Listen, my registration is wrong," or "I didn't get my registration card.  What's up?"  Sure, they could call the office, but everybody has a fear that they're going to call an office and they're never going to find a human being on that side of the -- on that end of the phone, whereas, with Twitter, I've seen people tweet, and then Alysoun would tweet back, and then you establish a link there that didn't exist before.  So, there's -- it's almost -- you feel good about it that you're interacting directly with your government through this new tool.  And I think the District's Department of Transportation has also been great about it.  People say, "Hey, there's a pothole at K and 15<sup>th</sup>" and the person that's tweeting responds and says, "We'll get on that."

So, I think that, you know, Twitter is great and good and wonderful.  It's good for spreading information, but there has to be that back and forth, which is what that tool was set up to do.  It's not just a means to communicate your vision or your message but, rather, a way for you to also take in people's ideas and work with them.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah, it's not just a broadcast medium.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Right.

MS. CHISNELL:

You're having a conversation and you need to manage that conversation, and there are good ways to do that and bad ways to do that. But being responsive is key.

DR. KING:

Martin do you think…

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

And if I can jump in on that, too.

DR. KING:

Sorry.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Everyone else watching the space sees that conversation happen.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

So, you can have the best customer service representatives in the world manning your phones at the front desk, but unless you bring in a camera crew to, kind of, showcase what a great job they do, nobody sees that. But, if you just answer those same questions with the same level of responsiveness that you would be showing otherwise, you're doing it in a much more obvious way, in a way that people not only see, "Hey, wow, they actually do respond when somebody contacts them," and then, they also get the benefit of the substantive response to that answer, as well, "Like, oh, I hadn't thought to ask, but I didn't know the answer to that question either."

So, you get all these different sort of additional benefits from that exchange about whether it's the pothole, or whether it's, in our case, you know whether you need an ID for this purpose or that, at the polls.

DR. KING:

Martin, you've identified an agency that may not be using Twitter in the most strategic way. And Dana made the observation that it's really -- it's a duplex communication channel, it's not just pushing information out. Do you think that there's a connection between a misunderstanding of both the expectation and obligation of that two-way communication and their perceived struggle to use it properly?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Oh absolutely. I mean, like I said, I think a lot of people jump into it because they've been told that it's the new thing, and it's also free. There's no way that your boss is going to tell you not to do something, if you pitch to them without saying, "Oh by the way, here's the budget that's attached to this plan." I mean, you're just signing for Twitter, so there's that, or Facebook account. But, again, I pointed out the Alcohol Board. I don't want to malign the people at the D.C. Alcohol Board. They're great and fine public servants and so are the folks at the Department of Health. But I think they also jumped into it, you know, and all the Department of Health does is say, you know, every once in a while they'll tweet something about how it's important to, you know, wash your hands after you're on the Metro, or that you can get flu shots on "X" date at "X" location. And that's great, it's good information, but it's -- I

don't know, I feel like it's missing the point of the tool that they're using. And also, the audience that's getting those messages are probably getting those same messages, otherwise, or know this stuff already. So, I think it's, kind of like, they're misunderstanding the audience and misunderstanding the purpose of the tool.

DR. KING:

Okay, Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I think it brings up a couple things to me, and I just thought it was a good place to sort of -- I have a Twitter account, beyond everything else, so I can monitor, more than anything, to monitor what's going on. And I believe that if you're thinking about what advice to give election officials that haven't done this, that is a huge piece of it, so that you can also monitor what other industries are doing, because it's one thing to kind of look within, what Martin was saying, our own election group, but I think the organization, right now, that appears to be kind of best practices in this, is, Delta Airlines, where they have, Delta Assist is a Twitter account. And basically, people -- and I subscribe to it, and I watch people say, "Well, my flight was diverted," or "I need to do this." And they have people who really are responsive, helping them, and responding back then, saying, "Well, I've got you on this flight, or that flight, or give me a call at this particular number." And I have no idea if any of that is effective, but it makes my perception of Delta Airlines go up tremendously, because, wow, they're responsive, and they're helping them. And I have – I mean, at least it looks that way to me. So, I now want to fly Delta.

And I think there might be an opportunity for us, as election officials, in 2012, to have an election assistance kind of Twitter, where we have, instead of people manning phones, or maybe, in addition to, we have someone manning that, saying, "If you're having an issue, direct message here, and we'll get back with you." But, I think it's good to look at other industries. Too often we don't really think of that or even -- we may look at other government agencies, but we don't look at other industries. And I believe, right now, that's a good best practice, is Delta.

DR. KING:

Okay, good. Lee?

MR. RAINIE:

Well, I'm going to take a stab, at least, some of the planks of the media --- of the strategy here, so that must make me the record label. So...

[Laughter]

MR. RAINIE:

Which is not particularly the good thing to be these days, but here's my stab at it.

Consistency is job one. If you're saying one thing on one channel, and another thing on another channel, that's disaster. So, you know, having uniformity to the core messaging you want, is essential.

But synergy matters, too. I mean, Dana's point is brilliant, that you can drive -- you ought to be striving to drive traffic to the things where you have those consistent messages. But it also sort of is important to note how Chris has described a wonderful way

that lots of people use YouTube, which is, do-it-yourself-teaching, you know. You don't necessarily get that from the full-page newspaper ad that outlines the ballot for you or describes the new voting mechanism. People will want to go to those channels because they now have expectations that it will be there and it will be useful. So, synergy matters, and sort of figuring out which platforms will serve some of the primary messages you want, make sense.

It's participatory. I mean, again, to Martin's point, this is a conversational space, now, and markets are conversations. That's the sort of mantra from Internet time in the 1990s, the Clue (ph) Train manifesto taught us all that. And if you're not willing to be participatory and share in the conversations, and you're not willing to have those conversations, you know, observed by others, then you probably shouldn't be in those spaces. And, you know, some people will hold it against you, but it's better not to be -- to use them the wrong way -- it's better not to use them the wrong way, basically, than to be in them and think, well, this is just another platform for me to blast out messages that I need to have all these less smart people know about. It's just not going to work.

This is the fourth plank, it would be feedback. Literally, you have people who care about you and love you, and you have other people who are complaining about you. And finding those acolytes to help them spread the word about what you're doing and responding to critics is part of this game. Again, people have an expectation now, two-thirds of people are content creators and they

want to comment and rank and rate and describe things about them, and being an observer of that feedback is a good thing.

And the fifth plank is to repeat a wonderful notion from my colleague Suzanna Fox, who talks about everybody being prepared at all times for their close-up. You know, there are moments in lives of election officials when you know most of the world that you care about is going to be paying attention to you, and you've seen that in the rhythms of your life before all these things came into your life and be ready for them, you know. Be ready with the array of tools and the array of information that people are going to want and the kinds of conversations that you know will be coming up as you watch election cycles unfold.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. I think we're going to have time for two quick questions, and the first, actually, came in from a viewer on the webcast. Larry asked, "is it important that the progress of counting ballots be presented to voters, and perhaps, a series of tweets be generated and sent to voters as their votes are counted?" Obviously, there's some issues with privacy of the ballot, where we could never communicate that an individual vote has been counted. But for the election officials at the table, is that a valid use of social media on election night, to inform the jurisdiction on the progress of vote tabulation?

And I'll start with Brian, and I'd like just hold this, if I could, to the election officials, so we can get the last question in.

MR. NEWBY:

Well, one of the things we do, is, we have a video camera on -- in our warehouse, so that people can have some streaming on election night to see, as results come in. And because of the way you tabulate results, it sometimes, you know, you want to think it's like a gas pump and you just see the results in coming, but it doesn't really work that way. And if you stop and give an interim, all you do is you slow down everything. And so, what we did is -- I guess people assume if they don't see anything, the whole election has gone terribly wrong.

And so, what we do is, we have a little widget on our website where, we don't use this for -- we could, I guess, tweet, but what we do is, we have a little progress bar, and we say number of results that have been returned, as we hand deliver all our results back. So, we have 300 polling places, we received 50 of them so far. And maybe, ten minutes later we say it's now 60. And then, once they're all in, we'll say we're beginning to tabulate, so we're probably about -- you know, then we're doing crosschecks, that's a phrase we started using, crosschecking, so we're 15 minutes away. So, we do have kind of a progress bar on our website just for that very reason.

So, I do think it's important, because the more people see what's going on, the more they feel that everything is okay. And so, I do think it's very important.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

We decided that it was.  What we did -- and we had launched a Facebook page sometime ago and never really put -- it was sort of one of those -- the modern day, you know, Facebook equivalent of those cobwebs on the web, you know, and we decided to sort of resuscitate it just before the election.  And actually, the content that we were putting up on our Facebook was, in this case, pretty much overlapping what I was also doing on Twitter, as well.  And what we decided to do was to sort of follow the progress of packing the boxes, loading them on the truck, having the trucks go off to their staging areas, the trucks going off to the polls, on through, the closing the polls at the end of the night, and uploading the results, and the activities that were going on in our server room.  And I was just wandering around with my iPhone and taking pictures and using tweet deck on my iPhone, which would then take those pictures and upload them to Wifrog, a picture -- photo sharing site on the web, and we just kind of told the story with our own little sort of photo journal of Election Day, and of those other sides of the process that people don't see.  I don't know how much bang we really got for that.  But it was kind of fun and I think that, you know, I got a little bit of feedback, that, at least some of the real election junkies appreciated some of that window into stuff that they never really -- they never really had that full and complete picture.  And I would like to think had we had any sort of a real problem, at least, I wouldn't have had to explain all that stuff, too, in addition to whatever else I would have had to deal with, as far as, you know, a polling place closing issue or something on election night.

And I just think that getting people context on what we do and how we do it, it's this mysterious process that doesn't happen very often, and I'd like to think that doing everything that we can do to sort of get that out there so that people can see it and can understand it, at least helps us start with a little bit of a higher baseline. Once we reach that point where we really do need to explain more, there's some little piece of it that suddenly captures the public's imagination that we need to explain. At least, we've tried to stage it and to package it and to get it out there already.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Chris?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

In Clay County, it's worked extremely well, and that comes by viewing the fact that nobody comes to our office on election night anymore, by and large. At 7 p.m. we redirect our URL to our elections reporting page that just continually updates as the precincts are modeming in those results from the precincts to that. In addition to that, I saw a great effort that my colleague, Jerry Holland from Duval County. The first thing, about 5:30, he tweeted the ground rules for election reporting. At 7 p.m. we will produce our early voting numbers, which will include all absentees that have been canvassed to that point. Thereafter, on the quarter hour we will be updating the results of our website. So, he set the expectations and the timelines, did extremely well. I applaud him for that. That is something that, of course, Clay County will steal from Duval County in the future and will use that, because here again what it did, is it answered that question when are the results

going to be updated for that. Of course, you can have a progress bar on our website that says this is when it was last updated, this is when it's going to update, but to set those ground rules out in the early stages of the evening just had huge dividends there in Duval County for that.

So, I think it is very important, it plays a very unique role, again, in providing that real time data, or as near to real time as possible for those election results.

DR. KING:

Thank you. We are up on top of our first hard break at 10:30. There is another question that I'm going to ask you to think about during break, and we're going to come back and visit it as a group, and it deals with risk mitigation. And, for those of us in election administration, the identification of the threats, and then strategies, to mitigate those risks, it's a constant theme in what we do. And I'm curious of this group's perception of what are the risks that are associated with, Martin, perhaps a halfhearted effort to adopt social media strategies, or what are the risks for an imperfect strategy that's imbalanced between your media options, or the risks associated with an inconsistent collection of messages, as Lee pointed out. So, I think we'll come back and visit that later.

I want to thank Lee. In his introduction, he did not mention that he's the former managing editor of the U.S. News and World Report, the most important publication in the world to universities, because we wait each year for the rankings to know where we stand. So, I don't know if you were associated with that group, but...

MR. RAINIE:

If you like your rankings, I was associated with it.

[Laughter]

DR. KING:

Well, it could always be a little better.  I'll work that on the break, but again Lee excellent material.  And I'll remind all the viewers on the webcast that any of the presentations will be available from the EAC's website www.eac.gov and we encourage you to go there.

Let's take a 15-minute break and we'll return at 10:45, and Dana will be our presenter after the break.  Thank you.

\*\*\*

[The roundtable panel recessed at 10:31 a.m. and returned to open session at 10:46 a.m.]

\*\*\*

DR. KING:

Well, thank you.  Welcome back.  We're in the second portion of our program today, the roundtable discussion on the use of social media and election administration.  The second segment will look at social media as kind of a cultural phenomena, who uses it.  In the first session this morning, we heard a lot about the statistics as it relates to changes in behavior and voters, or at least, in politically active users of social media.

And now we want to look at the use of social media from its cultural perspective.  And to open up that session, Dana Chisnell of Usabilityworks will talk about the human element and the cultural aspects of social media.  At the conclusion of her presentation, we'll have a series of questions that we'll go through.  And, again, trying

to stay right on our schedule of a 12 o'clock hard break, so, with that, Dana.

MS. CHISNELL:

Oh, sorry, I was tweeting.

[Laughter]

MS. CHISNELL:

First, I want to start out taking a half a step back to talk about what I think of as social, and what social media really means.  And when I go talk to other designers, other people in the usability dodge about social media, the social web, I assert that social is anything that one person does that affects or changes the behavior of another person.  So, while we're talking about this new media stuff, you know, Twitter and Facebook, Flicker, LinkedIn, things like that, everything that's happened online is, by its nature, social.  There are at least two parties involved.  There is a conversation going on there, whether you think of it that way or not.  And there's a message receiver and a message sender.  So, just keep in mind, this is one of the reasons that I brought up e-mail as part of the social network, your website, every press release you've ever put out is part of a social conversation.  So, keep that in mind as we go forward.

Having said that, now, I want to spend some time talking about who's using social media to get information about elections.  I did a very informal little study over the last week or so, through a number of channels, trying to find out who were the kind of people who would follow an election department for their city or their county.  And I found a few counties that have very active Twitter

accounts, and just wanted to look at who their followers were. Most counties that have Twitter accounts don't have a lot of followers. D.C. has quite a few followers, but D.C. is kind of special, in a lot of ways. L.A. County has about the same number of followers that D.C. does, even though there are about 4 million registered voters there. So proportions are not necessarily the thing to keep in mind. Of course, in the San Francisco Bay area and Silicon Valley there are a lot of people using social media.

So, I took as my little pilot the Twitter account for the Champaign County Clerk, and picking a place right in the middle of the country, it does happen to be a university town, so there may be a little bit of a skew there, but I found this county with an active Twitter account, and tallied up the types of followers that I saw there. Then, I looked around at other county and city election department Twitter accounts, kind of, to check the proportions. And I also got verification from a couple of election's directors from large jurisdictions and small jurisdictions, and communications managers from local elections departments.

And so, what I learned might surprise you. It's a slightly different cut from what Lee presented, and kind of what we've talked about here. Remember we're talking about people who actively opted in to get information from a local election official, or an election department, through the social web. And so, I have a bunch of examples to show you, too. They're all real people who are online now. So, I didn't make these things up. You might mention these people if you happen to be tweeting. It will probably surprise them to find out that they're the stars of the meeting today.

So, first, the largest constituency of followers on all of the Twitter sites and all of the Facebook pages that I could find were young people. And by young people, I'm going to say anybody who's 49 or younger, but by and large they're in their mid to late 20s to mid 30s. And this is how they identify themselves. I've made these decisions, by the way, based on what people said in their public profiles. So, they volunteered the information. I didn't -- you know there was nothing that I have that's special. So, this is one of the young people who follows the Champaign County Clerk, and this is the kind of thing that he tweets. Not a heavy-duty tweeter, but also interested in what's going on in the county.

Next, there are so many press people, so many media people on every Twitter account that I looked at, following every Facebook page that I looked at, it was just astonishing. To me, it's clear that social media has taken the place of press releases. Twitter is the new press release, only, you publish them every day.

When I interviewed Carol Marx, who is the communications manager in San Mateo County, in the election department, she told me that her little group of people, there are four people on the staff, had, as – they had set a goal for themselves to put out three tweets a day. This is very easy during an election cycle, but it's not so easy off cycle. And so, they had all of these strategies about how they were going to do that. So, one of the things that made it fun for them and made it work for them is that they had four people doing it. So, one person might take one day, one person might take the next day, and sort of challenge each other. But, there were rules and guidelines about how they did that, so I'll talk about

those kinds of things in a minute.  But this is the kind of stuff that you see the media tweeting.

Next, I found that older people, and that is people over 50, the PEW Internet and American Life and -- Project and Suzanna Fox, also at PEW, will tell you, though, that now, the boomer cohort is being split into two pieces, there's a younger boomer, and an older boomer, and the behavior is different online.  Younger boomers are definitely there.  I liked this guy Gordy, because he's multi-channel, what with his YouTube liking.  He had a whole bunch of stuff in his feed that he'd gone to look at these YouTube things and clicked the "like" button.  But part of what happens there, this is the viral aspect, right, he has liked this YouTube video, that goes out to all the people who follow him.  So, imagine if you could get him to like your video of how your election department works, and then, his followers see that, it gets fed to his Facebook page.  Suddenly, a lot more people are seeing this that you don't have direct contact with, but this is part of the extended conversation.

Now, this tweet forwarding thing, it's called retweeting, can get kind of annoying.  To me, it makes me think of the kinds of things that my dad forwards to me in an e-mail every day, you know, all those jokes that you've seen a thousand times before.  But there are nuggets in there that are useful and interesting to all kinds of people.

One election director I got feedback from on my accounts said that he put activists and advocacy groups first on his follower ranking as the largest constituency.  And when we started talking about it, we agreed that it probably was not, because of sheer

counts of followers, or friends, but that they're the most likely to be engaged in the conversation. You are the most likely to hear from them, whereas, you might have a lot of young people following you, they might not take part in the conversation. They may just sort of follow, and take in information, but the activists and the advocacy groups are much more likely to start a conversation, or to complain, and you'll have to respond. This is kind of an example of that.

There are also quite a few local businesses. Here they are minding their own business, but it was pretty consistent across all of the accounts that I looked at, that there were people -- there were small businesses, and their Twitter accounts were culled out as their small business; a restaurant, a store, you name it. And they were watching what was happening mostly, not really contributing to exchanges very much. Although every now and then, you might see a tweet or a note on a wall, a comment on a wall, on a Facebook page that culled someone out in the election department, or in city, or county government, for some information that they needed, or a question that they had. Usually, it related to how small business was treated, what small business policy was in that area.

It's also very, very common for other government departments to follow one another. And there are a lot of advantages to this. First, it's a show of support, right? We're here for you. But also, it's a way to share information among departments that don't necessarily talk to each other in real time or don't have a chance to do that. And you can, you know, retweet each other for content and sometimes that's really useful and

relevant.  But it's also a way to share information, get a lot of data, get updates about legislative and operational things that are going on in the city or county, as well.  People enjoy that.  That's one of the reasons that they follow you.

There were also -- it was not uncommon to see people describe themselves in their profiles as political wonks or political junkies.  And I had expected them to appear in much higher proportion.  It's possible that while a lot of people didn't include these attributes in their profiles, that it actually crosses over into the other little personas, the cohorts that I pulled out; the younger people, the older people and the small businesses.

There were surprisingly few Twitter accounts for political parties or chapters of parties.  They're much more likely to have Facebook pages or to use services like meetup.org where they're announcing meetings or events where they want people to show up.  So if you want the ear of parties or if you want to hear what parties are doing, you need to follow them where they are and that's usually on Facebook.

Finally, there are, of course, the "animal" accounts here and there.  This squirrel is a follower of the Champaign County Clerk.  And he was concerned about funding for parks and recreation.

So, that is my little survey of who's out there using social media to get information about what's happening in the election department, when elections are happening, what the results are, that kind of thing.

I want to emphasize that just because they're following you, or they're friends on Facebook, doesn't mean that you're going to

hear from them necessarily, and the large numbers of people are just going to be listening and taking in information and a small group of people are actually going to engage you directly in conversation, in this format. But all those other people, as Alysoun pointed out, are going to be watching and listening. It's happening in public, even though it feels like a one-on-one exchange.

So, what does it look like? Their websites, this is -- I'm going to go back here -- this is the website for the San Mateo County Election Department. This is a blog from the Champaign County Clerk, keeps it pretty up-to-date, although there can be gaps in these things when there's no election cycle going on.

Facebook pages have lots of different flavors and there's a lot of good stuff you can put there. This is from the Los Angeles County Clerk.

Twitter, as we've been talking about, this is the Twitter page from San Mateo County Election Department.

YouTube is huge. This is also from San Mateo County. They had a very specific strategy to put video up of elections at every step. They also do a lot of voter education on YouTube and a lot of reporting in a variety of ways.

So, I just want to show where social media shows up, where the entry points are. So here, for example, on the San Mateo County website, they had all the social media you could possibly get. It was a total smorgasbord of options from what they call their Democracy Live channel, which is actually YouTube, they have just a special area of YouTube that they put videos on, to Twitter in the middle, RSS feeds, which a lot of people don't actually use these

days, because they're not intuitively obvious how to use, but also Flicker which is a photo sharing website.  The Los Angeles County Clerk has a beautiful website, but the social media entry is a little bit hidden, so that orange line is where the screen would scroll.  So, you know, the top is the first view and you'd have to scroll down to actually see those.  So, if it was something that you were looking to do, to follow Dean Logan on Twitter, you might actually have to look around a little bit.

Twitter has all of these interconnections too, and that's something you should be aware of, if you're going to use it. Everybody can see everything that's going on.  There's very little -- once you connect to people, everybody can see how you're connected.  And that's how I saw those profiles, right?  I could just go to the Champaign County Clerk's Twitter page, click on "followers" and I could see the whole list and I could see every profile there.  And then, I could click through further.  So take that into account.

On Facebook, it's all about the "like" button.  Once you click that, information from the page that you have liked shows up in your newsfeed on your Facebook page.  So now that I have clicked the "like" button on the Los Angeles County Clerk website -- or Facebook page, whenever the department puts something on their Facebook page, I actually see that on my Facebook page, which is really cool, very useful.

So, there's a few other -- there are many other options for social media.  But I want to talk about why you would want to do this.  And the number one response that I got when I was talking to

election officials was about transparency.  We want everybody to know exactly what we're doing, exactly when we're doing it, we want to answer the questions before they get asked, and we want to set an atmosphere of being open.  But we also want to control the story as much as we possibly can.  We own this election story; we would like to direct it, if possible.  But the feedback that you get helps you learn about what voters care about, what their priorities are.

Not to be lost, though, is the connection that you make with the community.  A lot of election departments are in their department, they administer elections, their connection with the community is a poll worker on Election Day.  But there's a lot that happens in between election cycles.

But mostly, what I heard from communications people in elections departments about using social media is that it could actually be fun, you know.  You're communicating out, but there's this conversation that's happening, and people begin to be engaged.  There's a personal connection that they really enjoy, even when there are people who are disgruntled with what you're doing.

As Martin mentioned, it's important to do it right, and for the right reasons.  And so, you do have things to talk about, and one of the key things to talk about is what it actually takes to put on an election.  Most people are woefully ignorant of how hard it is to put on election and how many intricate steps there are.  So, you can talk about that step by step.  Tweet it out or put a message out or

send an e-mail out, "Here's the progress that we're making." But, it's also a great way to answer questions.

So, I want to just stop talking with a few tips, and then, a couple of resources for making this not so scary and making it feel like it's approachable, and like you can actually do this. One is, if you're going to do it, make sure that you keep the conversation going. It's okay to have a little bit of a lull when there's not an election cycle going on, but if you can kind of keep a little bit of information going out, it's going to be easier to do things like recruit poll workers in the next cycle, because there are still people who are aware of you.

Use plain language. Elections are rife with all kinds of jargon, but not everybody knows what an over vote is, not everybody knows what a canvas is. So, you don't have to dumb it down, people are smart who are consuming this information, but be plain about it.

Among you and your department, even if it's only you, think about what's the voice I want to use. Is it a voice of authority or is it a friendly voice? You know, think of the person who's at the desk at the election department when somebody shows up. What would the friendliest, most informative person be like, and how would that manifest online?

Don't forget you have a lot to talk about. There's a lot of content and communication that you have to offer. Value that, treasure it, and know that the people you give it to will also value that.

Think about content in the broadest possible sense. It's not just words. It's not just words on a website. It's not just a 140-character message. There are so many things that you have to offer, from photographs and videos to audio messages to memos or notes from meetings.

And, as has come out a number of times here, be sure to coordinate across all the channels. If you've got one person twittering, and some other person managing Facebook page, make sure that they're talking to each other "IRL," as the kids call it, in real life, about what you're going to do and how you're going to do it, even if it's really informally.

The directors who I talked to really recommended that you be as neutral as possible when you're talking about elections, just reporting what's happening, but that it was okay if there was local legislation happening that affected what was going on in the election department, to take a position, because people were interested in what was going on there. So, those are the tips that I want to leave you with.

And finally, I have some resources that local elections officials might get some useful things out of, as they approach this. One is, in terms of thinking about content, there's a great book by Ann Handley called "Content Rules." It's absolutely super about how to approach all that. Thinking about social network and how community works is a book by Mitch Joel called "Six Degrees of Separation." And finally, just for getting the message out is a fabulous book called, "Letting Go of the Words" by Ginny Redish that will help you focus and put out a clearer message.

So, thanks.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you, Dana, great presentation. The ability to look at the kinds of people, through the lens that Dana has provided us, the kind of people that will be linking to our websites as election officials, or following the tweets, is very instructive. And I think what I heard in Dana's presentation was the emphasis on conversation. And that's the first question that I'd like to start with, and I'm going to start with Dana, and then kind of work in the opposite direction around the table.

You said that one of the most important things that an election office could do would be to determine the voice, the tone, the attitude, the intent of the communication that comes forward. And many of us who work in elections are very aware of the penalty for using ambiguous language in describing an election, so there's a tendency to think in terms of the jargon that we use, because that jargon is safe. We know that, for example, use of an under vote -- the expression under vote, we know what that means, and we try not to use things like "fleeing voters" which has a completely different connotation…

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah, yeah.

DR. KING:

…in explaining how under votes occur.

So with that, the question is, what guidance could you give an election official, not only about selecting that tone, but what are the relative advantages or disadvantages of selecting an

authoritative tone for this interactive media versus a conversational? And I'd like to start with that question and work our way around the table.

MS. CHISNELL:

Choosing the personality that you want, choosing the voice that you want your communications to have can feel kind of overwhelming. But, I think when you sit down together, you and the people in the election office who work elections, sit down together and think about it, it's just like hiring a real person to answer the help line, right? How do you want that person to address the person who calls? How do you want them to treat the person who calls and what their question is? And I'm pretty certain that most election offices have thought about this at some level or other. So, this is the online manifestation of the nicest, smartest, most responsive public servant there could possibly be. I think that's the right voice. Now, customer service is -- can be a complex art, sometimes, and there are personalities involved, which is a thing that you, at least, will have a social distance for using social media, that you can kind of take a step back. When you get a question on the phone, you have to respond immediately. But, on Twitter or Facebook, you can breathe, and talk to the other people in the office, and say, "How are we going to address this?" And there are advantages to that. So, I would say sit down together, decide what you -- if this were a person, what would the attributes of that person be? What would the qualities of that person be? And how would we like them to be with the public?

As far as authoritative versus friendly, I think it is, to some extent, situational. And, you know, you can imagine a scenario where there is some crisis; a bucket of ballots has just been recovered from a long lost closet, and you need to have a serious evaluation of what the processes and the operations were. This might be a time to pull out the authoritative part, saying, "Okay, we are actually really good at this, and we are going to continue to be good at this, but now, we're just going to recover from this problem," right? "We're going to move on from this and do whatever we need to do," as opposed to apologizing. Some election departments may decide that apologizing is the right thing.

So, there are local norms and kind of online etiquette, too, that are geographic. So, where I live in Massachusetts, Yankee straightforwardness is going to work every time. That's not going to work in other parts of the country. So, take that into account, as well.

DR. KING:

Okay. Jeannie and I are from Georgia, and she just tapped me. I think that was affirming your observation.

[Laughter]

DR. KING:

Let's move around the table, then, and talk about this notion of selecting that voice, the process that would lead up to it, advantages, and disadvantages.

MR. RAINIE:

I want to pick up on a theme of Brian's that I've observed in the commercial world, which is, that multiple voices are now honored

by some of the bigger institutions and sometimes bear some useful good.  There is definitely the voice of God, the institutional voice that no one has been fired for embracing that voice, you know.  It just sort of -- if you transfer to social media, the messaging, the messaging style, and the basic communications that you already use, you know, that's the safest possible course.  But, what I've heard about in the business community, is, places where the voice of God sits alongside the voice of the best customer service agent, who is a real person, who has a more conversational, more authentic voice, who is, "I'm here to solve your problems."  And I don't think that you necessarily have to choose one or the other as much as, sort of, say, there are probably different places or different -- even different Twitter handles that you can use for different strategies.

The other thing, though, to encourage that more informal voice to find a place in your repertoire, is what Dana was talking about in one of her really smart slides, elections are hard to do, and people don't necessarily have a sense of that.  And one of the things that we've seen in lots of other institutions is the more that you explain your processes, the more you describe your choices, the more you are open to saying, "We've made mistakes," or "We have an imperfect system," or "We didn't necessarily do everything right," people will give you credit for that.  And transparency is now a very important new marker of trust in institutions.  The more that you are disclosing what you do and the choices that you make, your decision-making process, people mostly will appreciate it.  And the more that you're in conversation with them on an authentic

human level, the more they know that they're dealing with a real human being rather than an institution that they can scream at. And so, there are advantages to having that voice, too, although the voice of God is certainly, sort of, the simplest one to execute.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Martin?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

So, in terms of voice, I think it's probably one of the hardest things for an institution to handle, because, you know, especially in an electoral institution you have to be -- you can't always be as jokey as an individual could be, because, I mean, elections are serious business. And you don't want people to think you're taking it lightly, like, "Oh, yeah, counting ballots. We'll do that when -- we'll kind of wing it as we go along." You, obviously, don't want to stress -- you don't want to send that message along. But, I also think you don't want to over control it, and you don't want to come off sounding too stiff, like you don't understand the medium itself. So, I think there's a healthy balance, and obviously, you have to know when to use which type of tone. Obviously, when you're talking about stuff like counting ballots, you should be more informative. And I think, you know, like we've mentioned, letting people in on the process, and kind of showing them how the process works is great, it's fantastic. And then, you know, there's other moments when you can be a little more engaged and you can be a little more personable. But it is up to the individual or the individuals controlling the account, and I realize for institutions that can be very frightening because they don't want that uncertainty that that one person is given that much

authority and that much judgment to say, "Well, this is when I'm going to be jokey and this is when I'm going to be serious."

And I was talking to Alysoun about this also, because what D.C. does -- well, I'm sure most jurisdictions do, I mean, obviously, like poll workers, precinct captains, area representatives, these are all individuals, human beings that volunteer their time, they come out and they help on Election Day. At the same time, they have cell phones, they have access to Twitter and Facebook, so they're going to -- for a day they're going to be a voice of authority, to a certain extent. And that can be terrifying from an institutional standpoint, because you've got someone who is working at a poll who does have partisan leanings, and who could say, "Oh my God, a Republican just walked in the door. This is the worst part of the day," and then, it throws the entire election into question.

[Laughter]

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Obviously, that's very partisan. But you should also not -- you obviously can't forbid them from using, you know, their access to those networks. So I think there's a careful balance and I think the way -- and Alysoun can...

MS. CHISNELL:

Some jurisdictions do, actually.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Yeah. Well, I mean, and what Alysoun was telling me, she can speak more closely to this, is that they gave them some guidelines basically like, you know, "Don't offer your personal opinions, be respectful, and we'll see how it goes." And I think it went relatively

well.  I mean, admittedly not that many precinct captains or poll workers were tweeting as they were working, but it was still interesting.

So, it just shows that there's a diversity of ways that you can have an institutional voice, but there's also a diversity of voices that you're going to have and you have to find ways to control them, or at least, maybe, not control them, but manage them.

DR. KING:

Very good, thank you.  Chris?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

I certainly think that voice is important, and we try to take the fun approach to that with trying to add, not necessarily humor, but a lighthearted approach as to a very important process.  I think as soon as you take away that lighthearted approach you become the teacher in Charlie Brown and you lose the individual in that.

I think it's important as Nikki, one of our followers just posted, she said that I think it's important when engaging the young that -- with young people, it's so relational.  You have to develop those relationships with those.  And I think that speaking to them in a lighthearted way about the importance of the process goes a long way to engaging them, and to where it makes them feel and recognize that they are stakeholders in the process.  And then, they become followers and their followers become our followers for that.

So, I couldn't agree more that it's very important to take a difficult and sometimes a very contentious process and really make it light in explaining that in detail.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you.  Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I think Dana made the point earlier, when you're selecting your voice for using social media, it's the same thing as interviewing a real person, and by and large, I think it probably should be the same person.  Whether it's -- now, not necessarily customer service, because your customer service individuals may be they've got a certain sort of knowledgebase of the certain part of the process that they're normally communicating on, and in the Twitter world, especially, maybe there are sort of other aspects of policy or procedures or of things that would ultimately end of reaching the agency spokesperson anyway.  I mean, it really is, and I've been a broken record on this this morning, but I think Dana's slides earlier showed it too that that media follower list is a pretty big one as far as...

MS. CHISNELL:

Yes.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

...who is engaging in the space.  And so, if it's your person who -- you trust somebody in your office to speak to the media, whether it's, you know, you yourself, if you're the director, or the office, or whether you have somebody else who you have who serves that role, and you really just sort of have to work through what level of engagement you're ready and willing to have yourself and/or who else in your office you trust to use that tool, as well as using the other tools that they use.  But, if you trust an individual to have a conversation that you're not a part of with the major newspaper in

your county, then why can't you trust that individual to tweet?  And I think if you just sort of use that same sort of a threshold, you can reach that comfort level with it.

But for the -- a couple things I wanted to sort of add to that though.  I actually was speaking to someone who has worked in an elections office who said, you know, we talked about these kinds of things, and for us, an employee who is not, maybe, at the top of the agency, it's a really frightening thing to imagine -- we'll handle voter calls all day, but it's a really frightening thing to imagine something I'd be putting out there in writing, well, maybe it's wrong.  Maybe – and, you know, it would be a very difficult position to put me in, to have me in the situation of having to have that level of responsibility for the written word, as well as just sort of the one-on-one communication that they do, in fact have, that comfort level dealing with the voters.  And so, that's something to kind of keep in mind.  I don't think that it's a good idea to make Twitter or Facebook or anything else an intern project, you know, nor -- and you really need to sort of work through who in the office you trust.

Two things I did want to add into that, though.  One is that even more so than in other offline kinds of channels, you are both the agency and you are yourself.  And so, people who have personal Facebook accounts, especially personal Twitter users, nobody -- people figure that out real quick.  They figure out who it is that's behind that agency veil.  And even if you're not, maybe, the agency spokesperson, but you're the voice of the  Twitter account, eventually, you know, it's sort of -- if you're on Twitter, if you're in any sort of a role where you're representing the agency out

publicly, whether it's on Twitter, or whether it's just going out and speaking to community organizations, once you're out there and you have that personal space you got to be real careful about what you talk about in your personal life. And, you know, political involvement that might have been okay and might even be okay under your office policies, such as they're written, maybe needs to be re-evaluated.

And I think the ultimate example of that, the ultimate sort of danger territory of that is exactly as Martin was describing earlier, where you've got, not just your staff, but now, suddenly, you've got basically, the directors of these field offices out there on Election Day who are going to be spokespeople for you. And it was always true before, that they could have a reporter coming up to them and, you know, putting a microphone in their face or just standing there with a notepad, and whatever your policies are on poll workers talking to the media, I think, should be basically seen the same way for social media. If you're okay with a poll worker talking to the media and dealing with a situation, then I think you should come up with some policies and rules and, you know, work through how to let poll workers engage in social media, as well. If it's not okay for them to -- you know if they've got to just call the office, call the office and you want to have sort of a clear policy that, you know, no cell phones, then that's that agency's decision. But think about it in a parallel way.

DR. KING:

I want to pause for just a moment, because I think Alysoun has raised an issue that I had not really fully contemplated, which is

most of our discussion, particularly in the role that I serve in the State of Georgia, is focused towards the election official, not towards the poll manager, and not towards the poll worker. And, in fact, they may be more likely to engage in the use of social media in a way that is contradictory or works across purposes to the office. And in the absence of a policy, that may be moving towards the top of my list, now, as something to think about in preparation for the 2012 cycle, which is not simply the professional staff that exists, but those temporary employees that we bring in, and often they bring in a complex set of motivations while they're working in elections, so excellent point. Thank you for that.

Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Right, I mean, to that point, though, social media, is not in a vacuum, and so, that, to me, is no different than -- I mean, every day I look at the "Letters to the Editor" in the <u>Kansas City Star</u> to see if there's any election workers who have sent a letter in about something political. There's a call-in show, a talk show, radio show that election workers will call in and there might be an issue with the election office on Election Day, where there's voter confusion and I'll hear people calling in saying, "I'm an election worker and it doesn't go that way." And you have that panic moment for a moment wondering, okay, how are we going to go with this? And even to that end of transparency, I've given that talk show host a copy of our training manual. And I think having your life out there in a more transparent way, the better.

We do the same thing. I have a personal Facebook account. We have, obviously -- I mean a personal – I have that too, but a personal Twitter. Then, we have an office Twitter account. I may retweet some of the things from the office, but they're certainly -- they're separate.

The one thing I would say regarding voice though, that probably, we have a little different perspective on, is, kind of, a less is more approach on what we communicate. When we rolled out text messaging and e-mail updates, like five years ago, early on we heard someone say, "Well, yeah, you've had it and I don't think I got an e-mail or a text message yet." And that was by design. We really wanted them to be things that were not -- we weren't going to overwhelm everybody with them, because then we figured people would ignore them. So, we had very specific times we were going to text message and e-mail. So, I see some people do kind of the two or three things a day kind of thing, and I think what that does to a degree is it conditions people to tune you out. And I'm very concerned that when we do text, and even when we tweet, I want people to notice it. So, we have been focusing more on the less is more. So, it's a little different on the voice, but that is certainly an approach we've had.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. I think Jeannie wants to make a point.

MS. LAYSON:

Yes, speaking of information that may be tweeted by poll workers or other employees, it's a delicate balance, because you want to be transparent, and that's what this meeting is all about, especially

Twitter. Yet, at the same time, we were talking earlier about voter behavior, so what may be a problem in a poll worker's eyes, may be something that's solved five minutes later. But, what was the impact of tweeting that? Did you discourage people from going to the polls if this was tweeted at, you know, a quarter to five and people are going to vote on their way home, would they not stop because they perceived there to be a problem at the polling place? So, it's a delicate balance.

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I think all of the things you hear being discussed fall into that. As an example, the people you talk about, we've looked at the same thing about an average wait time at an advanced voting site. Well, so do you -- are you keeping people from voting by putting that out? Or are you in any way stirring the pot driving people to vote in a way, you know, somehow influencing the election, kind of an unintended consequence? And I do think all of that has to be in the back of your mind with everything we do, just so that -- I mean, as an example, it's a kind of dorky thing, I have a personal social media policy that, you know, you get the LinkedIn, Facebook requests from candidates, and I won't friend a candidate. I don't want anyone thinking that we are in cahoots. I will friend them if they're a political -- if they are an elected official, because we work with them, and I fully understand that they later become candidates again. And I think I anguish over that more so than other people do and there's probably times that people fall through the cracks, but I worry about that kind of thing. I think just in general you do have to worry about unintended consequences, I think in general.

MS. CHISNELL:

This is definitely a thing that all kinds of organizations are looking at, in terms of social media. Mistakes have definitely been made in rolling out tools and networks. And so, it also works both ways, right? I mean, you have to be cautious from the elections office point of view, at least deliver it, right, conscious and knowing what you're doing.

But, also for the part of the people who are friends on Facebook of yours or in LinkedIn or signup to be contacts on Flicker, there's a lot of personally identifying information that could be attached to all of that. And so, now, you're in the realm of privacy for them and how much are you going to reveal that you know about what they've revealed about themselves, right? So, being respectful of the boundaries of the relationship, I think, is something that offices need to consider, as well.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

And that's into the -- because one of the things that I try to work through when we're having a communication with a voter on Twitter is where do you keep that information in the public sphere? Where do you -- keep it on Twitter, but switch over to a direct message because now you're really kind of talking, you know, about stuff that's not necessarily everybody's business? And where do you just take it offline, "Here's my e-mail address," or "Here's my phone number"? And it's just a matter of being conscious of who's listening in.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yes.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

It's covered under other policies of, you know, protecting the privacy of the voter, but it's just another way of needing to think about it in a tool.

DR. KING:

Jeannie?

MS. LAYSON:

I'd just like to add, the Environmental Protection Agency has done a lot of work with that, in terms of when to decide to take a conversation offline and also the customer service aspect. And we can post a link to that -- some of their materials about it that may be helpful…

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

That would be great.

MS. LAYSON:

...on eac.gov.

DR. KING:

That's great. Well, that leads -- a great segue to my next question. At the beginning today, I shared with this group, my thoughts, that all election administrators are IT managers. And one of the interesting phenomena in the management of IT is how critical ethics are, and how critical ethical policies are, first, in and of themselves; but, secondly, because of the velocity of change in the technology and its application environment, it's virtually impossible to contemplate rules in advance of the rollouts of some of the

technologies.  So, we have a heuristic process, as we learned with

e-mail, that maybe "reply all" is not the best way to respond when

you are agitated.  And so, we evolved some ethical guidelines

dealing with the use of e-mail.  They're still in the evolutionary

stage, but they're usually present in most organizations.  Are we

doing similar things with social media?  Are there unique ethical

challenges, and Brian, you mentioned one, which is, what does it

mean to be a friend?  To my 23-year old, friend doesn't mean what

it means to me.  And so, are we at a stage where there is a need

for an exploration of the extension of ethical guidelines within

election administration, expand the envelope around social media,

that's not there already?

And I'd like to start with Dana, and then, work around the

table and get your thoughts on where we stand with ethical issues

related to social media, and where we need to be standing

regarding ethical policies within government agencies, in general,

but elections specifically dealing with.

MS. CHISNELL:

I'm not sure how to answer this question.  I think any public servant,

any election official, already sort of has ethics coming into and out

of their pores.  This is something that you live with every day

because you're walking the line all the time.

But otherwise, I'm going to turn this over to other people who

might have more to say about that.

DR. KING:

Okay thank you.  Go ahead, Lee.

MR. RAINIE:

You're a good example of I think what the reality is, which is we're standing in the middle of the tornado on the ethics of this. There are not accepted social norms, yet, in many of these things. There's certainly not rules of etiquette about some of these things, and there are absolutely wildly confusing things about the way people behave and their attitudes about their behavior.

So, for instance, you hear from lots of people, particularly from younger users, that, "Even though I posted it on Facebook, I don't want you to embrace it, I don't want you to acknowledge it, I don't want you to include this in your basic understanding of me, I did it for my friends." And so, there are ways in which people are sharing incredible amounts of information, and it's asynchronous, you know. They have one set of motives and one audience that they're thinking of when they do that. And yet it's persistent, it's searchable, it can be taken wildly out of context or removed entirely from context. And so, it's a disorienting world.

And so, you know, what you hear a lot from teachers, among others, is that this is one of the new kinds of literacies we're going to have to develop as we navigate these spaces. And I think the -- again, so, in an environment when you're in the middle of a tornado, maybe the thing to be is just transparent. These are the things we're going to act on about what we know about you and what we understand you to be, and these are the things we're going to ignore, or these are the things that we're not going to, you know, process as, you know, a part of our understanding of you. And, again, soliciting feedback is a good thing too, saying, "Here's what we're confused about this." You don't have to come up with a

ready-made set of rules that you, you know, pound in stone as a

commandment.  You sort of -- this is part of the conversation.

MS. CHISNELL:

One of the things that you brought up, Lee, makes me think that we

should also be talking about usability from what the profiles are

made up of, so, while people are putting things out there that they

want only their friends to absorb and they're saying they don't want

others to have access to that or take that into account, I think

there's a basic lack of understanding of how privacy settings and

sharing settings work in many social networks.  And, in some of

them, it is made purposefully complex because there are lots of

different levels and lots of different combinations that you can have.

And so, an elections office should be very aware of that just for

themselves and what you're -- how you are bounding, who you're

putting information out to, but also, in what you're seeing come

back from the people who you're friends with, and who you're

following and respecting those boundaries.

But like Twitter there are two options.  You can be public,

totally public, or you can have a private account where you only

allow people in who ask to be let in.  That's pretty simple.  But

Facebook, much more complicated.  And this is where candidates

get in trouble, right, because they haven't defined who the groups

are that they're giving information to.  And this is also where private

citizens get into a lot of trouble, with employers, for example.

So, there's the usability side of respecting the ethical

aspects of all of this too, and some people are just subject to the

tool that they're using.

DR. KING:

Good.  Before I move on, I would like to remind the viewers on the webcast at www.eac.gov that there's still time to submit questions before we break for lunch at noon, and we welcome any questions that are submitted.

Lee brings up a point that I think has been intimated at a couple of times, and that is, that there may not be generational -- significant generational differences in the behavior of users once they embrace the technology and get on, but there are some generational issues about younger users and their notion of privacy.  And some of that may be experience, et cetera.  The irony is that in many organizations, because those younger users indicate a willingness to take one for the team and learn this technology and lead the rollout, we often have the most politically inexperienced people leading the way on the use of these technologies, and I think that may acerbate the situation.

Martin?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Just two quick thoughts, and I wanted to make one comment on the issue of voice, that just came to me, and that I've noticed a lot more amongst candidates than amongst election officials, is, let's say Chris has his own Twitter account that he uses to talk about election-related stuff.  What I've seen a lot is people who refer to themselves in the third person on these personal accounts, and it drives me and it drives a lot of people I know absolutely insane.  So Chris, if you do have a Twitter account that you actually use to talk about election-related stuff and you say you're going to go to some

88

polling stations, just say, "I'm going to some polling stations," not "Chris is going to some polling stations" because people can see through that and see, "Oh he's got an intern tweeting for him," and it just -- it drives us insane, from a journalist's perspective.

In terms of the ethical issue, I think one thing, and obviously, the election officials here could speak to this better than I could, I imagine that, you know, if you're engaging in that conversation with a voter or with an activist, with someone who is on a campaign, over Twitter, you're direct messaging back and forth. At what point are you legally obligated to take that to an official e-mail account where stuff is going to be stored on a server? Because there's obviously like, you know, transparency issues, open-government issues. And Twitter isn't a server that you can easily -- that after the fact someone is not going to fool you at Twitter and say, "I want to know what Chris was talking to X voter about." Twitter is going to be like, "Well, I'm sorry, that's not something that we can provide particularly easily," whereas, you know, there are, you know, statutes that govern that type of stuff.

So, I'd be curious to hear what their experiences were or if there's concerns about that. And that's more on the legal side than the ethical side.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Well, two points. Number one, anything that I do publicly I make sure that it's professional at all times. I certainly don't get into the

position to where I would do anything ethically, or anything else, that would take away anything from the office or from my position.

Florida statute's 119 has -- Florida has a very liberal interpretation of the Freedom of Information Act and all things are available. And, of course, I'm looking on our Facebook page and it says, "Please note, Florida has a broad public records law. Postings on this page regarding county business constitute public record and are available to the public," and then it goes on and on, as well as on our Twitter. And I was stating earlier during the break that one of the things that we do is we take snapshots of all interaction for that and we are archive that. So if there is ever a public records request we have something that we can refer to that's factual and what not.

However, with regards to YouTube, our YouTube account, we have that very tight. It's very easy to place videos on your YouTube channel that might not be appropriate. So, of course, we have very tight restrictions on that. So, it's a balancing act that you have to take. Of course, Facebook it opens you up fairly easy. You need to take the time to go into the controls and set all of those switches as to what can take place and what can't take place for that.

But to the question as to, you know, what takes place on social networking, whether it's public, whether it's private and how does ethics play in that, we take it for what it is. It's an open discussion that's available to all, and we keep those discussions very professional.

DR. KING:

Before we move onto Alysoun, I wanted to come back Chris and

ask you how, in, let's say the past five years, the distance between

what you consider to be your public voice and public face, and your

private voice, has the distance diminished between those two?

And I'm thinking about Brian's comment that it is possible, in almost

all cases, to find the authors of virtually any tweet, any posting.

And then, do you think that's generally true that that distance is

shrinking for all of us and election officials by extension?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

I certainly believe that to be the case.  I mean, for myself

personally, I've always been aware of what I say, how I say,

because I think it's only proper whether you're in public or whether

you're in private that you are Chris, in effect, and there isn't a public

voice and there isn't a private stance.  It's easier if it's just the same

for that for me to manage that.  But, yes I do.  I believe that

everybody is more consciously aware and, of course, it's in the

news on a daily basis, a public official that does something terrible

online or via e-mail or tweets, or what have you.  So I think that

public officials are very aware of what the repercussions can be

when you use improper judgment.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you.  Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I think everyone has made really good points that I don't really need

to echo.

The one thing that's sort of occurring to me as we're talking

about this is that these questions about privacy and how you

handle voters' information, in particular, is another area where this is -- the problem has been evolving. And it's not just Twitter. It's -- and Dana you had a description of social media, really, that was a very expansive one and that included, sort of, all online activity and websites and all of that, too. And I guess, maybe if I look at it that way then, you know, this is a social media thing.

But I'm -- what's front of mind for me, right now, is the way that we experience that, simply, in putting voter information up on our website. The District has an extremely liberal access to voter records, to voter information. There's very little information in your voter record that is not free of charge and easily available by just walking in our front door. But when you take that and put it on your website, suddenly it's a very different thing. It's no less public information -- it's no more public information, but it's just so much more easily accessible. And that then leads us to need to rethink and think through how -- is it just that the information is public but we need as a government agency to institute barriers for people's comfort level that, at least, whoever wanted their information had to jump through hoops to get it? Or is public information public information and we should be aggressively putting all of that information out there and someone who has objections to the fact that their information is public needs to take that up with the fact that it's public information to begin with? And that's sort of a difficult challenge to work through that I don't think that we've fully figured out how to resolve ourselves.

MS. CHISNELL:

If I may?

DR. KING:

> Um-hum.

MS. CHISNELL:

> I think to some extent there's going to be a local standard, though, which will work in voting and elections. It doesn't work in other ways. But, you know, just the difference between Virginia and Maryland I would say, "Don't do it in Virginia. Probably, it's okay in Maryland," you know what I mean? Definitely okay in California, not so okay in other places. But...

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

> And that is a nice comfort to election officials in these arenas, particularly dealing with public disclosure of information or what have you. We're not unique in that respect, that we've got files that have, you know, public information on people. And so, we do have the ability to turn to our colleagues in other government departments and figure out, have some comfort in standing elbow to elbow with them, in whatever our public records policies are.

DR. KING:

> Thank you. Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

> Well, I think the new trend we'll see will be people who try and make themselves invisible, you know. I think that privacy issues will be such that -- we're talking about how to engage people in all these mediums, and I think we'll start to see people bail out of that, try and have no trace that they exist on the web, as opposed to exist everywhere.

And as election officials, sometimes that might be a good thing for us. But, on the other hand, then you look like you don't get it, you know. How can you engage with these tools, and yet, also not put yourself out there? And I agree, I think everybody is mindful of them. I do believe ethical things happen when you haven't thought through the consequences, and it's hard to think through consequences when it's all brand new. So I see that, but I think -- I just think that the toughest thing is being out there. And if people want to hurt you, because I think that's kind of where this all leads to...

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah.

MR. NEWBY:

...they're going to hurt you anyway. But when you're -- the more out there you are, the more transparent you are, you're kind of giving more opportunities for someone to think that you shouldn't have done this. And, at least having some grounding in why you did it in the first place, I think, helps. And beyond that, I don't know that it always will prevent it, but it's easy not to say, "Well, yes," for instance, "I'm a friend with that person because I didn't -- they asked me to be a friend, but I didn't accept it until after the election and I did and they were an elected official." At least you have something. I mean, maybe that won't be good enough for someone, but at least you thought through it. And I think that is the ultimate, is the more you can anticipate the more think through the better.

DR. KING:

Okay very good, we do have a question from a viewer.  Phil had asked the panel to discuss what are the most appropriate social media technologies for an election official to embrace.  And really I want to let you take that because I think you went back old school, and then kind of went down the list, so I'm going to let Dana field that question.

MS. CHISNELL:

Appropriate.  It depends on how you're getting to appropriate, I guess, and what it is that you want to do.  Why are you engaging in social media to begin with?  What is your purpose for doing that?  And then, look at what resources you have available, how easy is it for you to keep up the conversation and ensure that you continue to be responsive.  And then, it's about what you have available to you internally.  How many human resources, what people do you have there who can do this and what can you deal with technologically that won't disrupt everything else that's going on, you know, running an election.

So, you know, is there a hierarchy?  I would say, do e-mail if you can.  Definitely have a website.  Think about Facebook pretty seriously, especially for recruiting young people to be election workers.  It's a great outlet, a great place to draw people in there.  If what you want to do is show your constituencies, show your jurisdiction how things work, and what you are doing, visual networks work really well, like Flicker and YouTube.  They're very low cost, all of them, in terms of real dollars.  But it's pretty easy to spend a lot of time, pretty soon, so, you know, be aware of that and maintaining that and making sure that it is usable.  So for example,

for photographs on Flicker, think about having a tagging system that people can use to search the images that you put out there. I wouldn't do it by names of people, but I would do it by subjects, for example, or events or dates even.

So, you have to think about those kinds of things and what you're willing to invest, in terms of what you decide is appropriate.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MR. NEWBY:

Can I?

DR. KING:

Yes.

MR. NEWBY:

I guess, and this is not surprising, I guess, given my background, I would answer that, though, with all those things anything mobile. I mean, I would say even e-mail, all that is mobile, but basically, everybody carriers a phone anymore.

MS. CHISNELL:

That's true, everybody has one.

MR. NEWBY:

And that's probably the best way to reach someone anymore. So, I would say if you're going to look at a technology think of mobile first, and that would be my priority.

DR. KING:

Okay, Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

This kind of brings the punk rock discussion full circle. I think that while it is always valuable to know the tools available to you, whether they're social media or whether they're traditional media, whether it's constant contact, whatever it is, it's always valuable to know what those tools are, and know what their capabilities are. What you really need to work through is what are you trying to accomplish? What are the current shortcomings in your communications plan, in your strategic plan and what tools are best to accomplish what you need to accomplish? If it's training your poll workers on new equipment and you don't have the budget to go out and buy an expensive online poll worker training, you know, package, but you can take a video camera and take some pictures to get out to the poll workers, then that's -- it can be sort of a very low cost, no-brainer approach for you to take. If what you're trying to do is to -- it really just sort of depends on what it is that you're trying to accomplish.

MS. CHISNELL:

Know why you are doing this.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah, yeah.

DR. KING:

Okay, well very good. We are really right up at our lunch break. And I want to remind the viewers that we'll be breaking right at 12 o'clock Eastern Daylight Time and we'll be returning at one. When we return from lunch, Chuck Todd from NBC will be presenting us. He'll be the presenter right after lunch. We're looking forward to that.

For those of you, here, at the roundtable, there is a sheet of paper with your materials that describes all of the fine dining that's nearby and if you need directions Emily, at the back of the room, will vector you to the closest one that fits both your taste and your budget.

So, with that, thank you Dana, excellent presentation.

MS. CHISNELL:

Thank you.

DR. KING:

And for all the panel, excellent discussion. I'm making a list of things for myself when I get back to Georgia to do, so already a lot of value is coming out of this operation.

MS. CHISNELL:

Are you going to tweet the list?

DR. KING:

Yes, well, I put my picture with my tweet account, finally. So, with that, let's break for one hour and we'll come back at 1 o'clock, thank you.

***

[The roundtable panel recessed at 11:58 a.m. and returned to open session at 1:01 p.m.]

***

DR. KING:

Welcome back everyone. This is the roundtable discussion on Voting Goes Viral: Use of Social Media in Election Administration. For those that are joining us on the webcast, thank you. And we encourage you, throughout this afternoon's session, to access the

EAC's website at www.eac.gov. And please continue to send in questions, either tweet them, or there is a form -- a fillable form at the EAC's website, and we'll do our best to get to those questions.

We open this afternoon with a focus on the role of journalists and journalism in the use of social media and its implications in election administration. And for those of us in election administration, there's always been a relationship with the media, sometimes it's very cooperative, sometime under certain circumstance it approaches adversarial. But, there is a recognition that we need each other. We need access to journalists to help tell the narrative of an election, describe procedures, voter outreach, voter education. And conversely, journalists need access to election officials. We have accessed information that's valuable, that's timely. And we have a shared common interest, and that interest is the public trust and getting election information out fast and accurate.

And to open up our discussion this afternoon our speaker is Chuck Todd of NBC News. And with that, I will ask Chuck to begin his comments, and then we'll move into the discussion.

MR. TODD:

Well, I have a feeling we're going to get into a number of areas. I know that the focus of this is social media. I have a feeling we're going to talk a little bit about exit polling and a little bit -- a few other things that crop up that, probably, can be thorns in the sides of what you guys do.

I'll just tell you a quick story about my interactions in social media, which, at first were very hesitant. In fact, it was really anti-

Twitter, at first, to the point of, "This is ridiculous, I don't care what George Stephanopoulos had for breakfast," right?  That's what he was tweeting.  That's what, like, him and Ashton Kutcher, or whatever, were tweeting back and forth.  And I thought, well, this is ridiculous.

Then, I bought into it as a wire service.  And that's how I use it.  I use it three or four different ways.  I use it as a receiver of information as a wire service, and it is now the primary -- my primary source of information.  I get up at 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning, unfortunately, and the first thing I do is check my e-mail, the second -- for overnight e-mails, overnight breaking news.  This is how I get my information.  And then, I go on Twitter and I read the Twitter feed for -- I read six hours of my Twitter feed that happened overnight, because I -- my Twitter feeds, mostly it's reporters.  Yes, there's political -- operative political types, left and right and stuff like that, but I subscribe to a ton of newspaper Twitter feeds and things like that.  So, it's a -- it is how I am -- you know, I have replaced The AP wire, in my mind, in sort of receiving information.  So, that's how I get it, and that's how I use it.

And for myself, in reporting, I have sort of three or four different beats, in many ways.  I always say, NBC hired me to cover elections and to cover campaigns, but I also have to cover the President, I also have to cover other parts.  So, Twitter is a way, if I'm covering Libya on air, but I want to cover what's going on in the Presidential race or in a special election for Congress, Twitter is my outlet for that.  So, that's how I use it.  I love it.  I think it's great.  I love the idea of 140 characters.  I think it helps us all speak

100

succinctly. And it's just such a fast and great way to share information.

What fascinates me about wanting to participate in this, when you guys asked, is, you know, we're evolving in trying to figure out how to count votes. And I always say even vote counting has a margin of error, as we learned in 2000. And, as you guys know, all the time, there's always a close election, and there's always a "hanging chad" here, or a ballot that wasn't signed there. So -- the margin of errors are very small, less than one percent. But the ability, now, to not just rely on us doing exit polls, and The Associated Press doing its version of vote counting, is now -- I mean, I think we are election cycle or two away from the fastest source to get real time election results is going to be from you guys. It's going to be -- certain States are incredible about it. The State of Florida, very sophisticated, fast system with counting votes, the State of Virginia, the State of -- and getting it online and posting it, the State of Kentucky, Texas, California. And then, there are some States that you would expect to be really good at this, because they've probably thrown a bunch or money on it, and they're horrendous at it. State of New York, are you listening?

[Laughter]

MR. TODD:

But it is -- what I'm looking forward to is sort of cutting out the -- I mean, you look at the 2000 election and what happened at us at NBC, right? And what happened was that there was an error, there was a counting error at the end of the day. A bad counting error was messing with the original reporting, forget -- and then there --

that counting error was factored into the mathematical equation that we, at NBC, use to call an election, thrown in with what we already had on the ground. I mean, and obviously, we've changed our ways. We're not going to call an election that close, which our own exit poll showed was going to be a one point race, at best. We're going to wait until 50 percent of the vote is in, before we do something like that again. We're not going to do it that way again. So that's good news on our end.

But I'm looking forward to the time where we're not -- when you think about what AP does, and the way we count votes, and the way we process it and put it on air, you know, the vote total that we get -- so we have a couple different ways, and I saw that you had Lee Rainie here. She used to work for the exit poll consortium I think before she went to open up PEW, I believe, if it's the same Lee that I'm thinking of. And you're going to tell me Lee is a man, correct?

DR. KING:

That is correct.

MS. LAYSON:

Lee is a man.

MR. TODD:

Then, it's not the same Lee. There's another Lee over there with an "R," so my mistake.

But the exit poll consortium counts votes, and then the AP has its own way of counting votes. We do our consortium, and then, the raw data is actually the last vote total we see, which in a close election, then, becomes the only vote total that matters, right,

because it's the one that you guys have to certify.  And so, I'm looking forward to this transition that I believe we're in, that we're within an election cycle or two.  And when I speak in cycles, I do two years.  So I say four, six years away from where, as every State is finally automated, that we will be able to sort of -- the first sourcing of election information is going to come from the State and the county, rather than the AP guy, who is a freelance guy, God love him, you know, who goes around to each precinct, gets, you know, whatever their system is that does it, that's great.  But when you think about it, we all know the game of telephone, right?  That's one more possibility of a number getting transposed, messed up.  And don't forget, all of us in the news media, from that first feed of election results that are "actual returns," that's AP's calculations of the numbers, not the State of Florida, or the State of Missouri, or the State of Kansas, you know.  Eventually, it becomes that, but we don't tell you that.  And that leads us to errors and problems, and then, that's when you get -- so the big danger, what are we seeing now on some election nights and what Twitter -- the good and the bad of Twitter, right?  The good is you see -- suddenly you'll see, well, why is there two different vote totals?  Why is the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporting one thing and the State of Wisconsin Elections Division reporting another?  And we just had the State Supreme Court race in Wisconsin, where there was some questions.  And then, immediately -- when there's a difference, immediately you get a whole chunk of people screaming fraud, right?  And that is -- that poisons the well.  And then, immediately when that happens, then that gets shared, and whoever-- what I

103

loved about, in a weird way, was a great experiment in the Wisconsin race. When the one candidate was winning, the one side was screaming fraud. The losing side was screaming -- the Republicans were screaming fraud. Then, when the Republican was declared the winner, the Democrats screamed fraud. You know, I guess it's like Illinois, right? If there isn't enough fraud on both sides, it balances out, you get the actual return. I'm kidding State of Illinois -- well, not really kidding. But your reputation precedes you. But, that was showing you how quickly the political partisans can take over a narrative and put you guys under the gun, where it's an automatic accusatory and, you know, look, we know that elections are zero-sum game.

So, the -- what I am looking forward to, with what you guys are using Twitter, when you were just talking about information, when you were pre-wiring, I guess, I want to know, in Duval County, that the ballots -- that, look, we didn't shut down the polls in five precincts and I want to be -- and when I'm -- on election night, I want to know that I have that information in real time, faster. And I look forward to getting it directly from the Duval County Supervisor of Elections, not through an AP story, not through a phone call. Now, you know the things that we do at different -- we do it -- every network does this on their own, is, you know, we all want to set up hotlines, the do-goodery, the good government, "Hey, if you're having problems at the polls, let us know." I think it's important that the actual folks involved, you guys start reporting the information up front, "Okay, we have a down box here." It could cut through some of the clutter. It could -- yes, it's going to increase the amount of

104

attention, maybe, some of this stuff gets short-term, but it is a way of demystifying the process, right? And that's -- the great thing about Twitter is it's demystifying, whether it's demystifying a Hollywood actor, or demystifying somebody -- a politician or demystifying a process like counting votes. That's where, you know, I'm hoping -- I'll give you my list of 250 swing counties, so I'll go to all the county election commissioners, and I'll ask you -- beg you to give us this information as we -- you know, so we can figure out this system, so that we're getting -- obviously, we want to have the right information, and we want to know in advance if there's -- you know, remember the Indiana Presidential primary where we had huge problems in Hammond, and in Gary. And we were relying on word of mouth crap, you know. And I wish -- Lake County's election official was constantly updating things and instead, the longer it took the more you start asking yourself, "Well, what's going on? Is there a held back ballot box? Is there this," you know? You don't want to -- for your own good, you don't want to create that sense of doubt, long-term, because then, you know, "Oh yeah, boy, those county officials here," you know. So, I think it's a -- it's potentially a very powerful way to quickly let us know information, go quickly. I can go on the Johnson County feed and find out, "All right, you know, we had to keep the polls open longer in these two precincts, so you're not going to -- the ballots are, you know, going to take a while to get counted."

So, I can stop there and we can open it up, or I don't know where you guys want to go.

DR. KING:

Well, we can stop here, and you can feel free to pick it back up…

MR. TODD:

Sure.

DR. KING:

...at anytime throughout our afternoon session.

The first question I have for Chuck is dealing with one of the long suits of traditional media was the care that they gave in triangulating stories, vetting them, making sure the sources were authenticated. And the speed at which social media often works...

MR. TODD:

Sure.

DR. KING:

…argues against that. From your perspective, as someone who is trying to concurrently assess and report, what kind of issues does that create for you on election reporting?

MR. TODD:

Well, I'll tell you this, I mean, you've got two different -- I've got some fellow -- some journalistic colleagues, who are as good of journalists as, I think, are out there. When they put something in print, they do it, but they believe in this open sourcing aspect of Twitter, which means, if they get a tip, and it's an intriguing tip and they're going to run it down, they'll retweet it and say, "This is interesting. Let's --I'm going to check it out." But, in the meantime, they've retweeted it. What if it's a false piece of information? And obviously, you know, there's, "Ballot machines aren't working in Cuyahoga County," you know, "in three precincts in Cuyahoga County," so somebody might tweet. And so, this is an issue. So I

believe I have a certain set of standards that isn't going to do that, I don't do that. But the problem is there's no one set of rules, okay? So, you're going to live in a world -- so, what I would say, is, you're living in a world where that's not going to be the case, and where we have -- you know, Tom Friedman wants to say the world is flat, right? Well, you know, the media is flat, okay, because trust me, some idiot that belongs on the high end of AM radio is going to report something that's not true, and it's me -- us, and the media that's reporting this stuff that's not true, you know. It's not that guy who belongs on the upper end of AM radio reporting it. Everybody -- just because he got an hour-long show on a cable channel, suddenly, it is the same equivalency as when Matt Lauer reports something. And so, while I can tell you NBC News has a set of standards, I can't tell you that the opinion folks that are on some of these same channels go through the same vetting processes that we do. So -- and that's the same with a Politico, with a <u>New York Times</u> now, with, you know. There's just -- that door is open, you know. We're not putting the toothpaste back in the tube. So, that's the world you're dealing with, which then argues for why you have to proactively -- you know, I used to be -- we all wish, in the media, that if we didn't cover a story, then we're not going to cover it.

And I used to say, "Do you have to sit here and prove a falsehood is not true that gains traction?" One of my favorite stories was the John Kerry intern rumor, if you remember. For about a 24-hour period, there was this rumor, and it was not true, but that John Kerry was having an affair with an intern. Drudge, boom; Rush, boom, took it and said Drudge is reporting it, it's out

there. It turned out, you know, this intern was having an affair with somebody that worked on the Kerry campaign. It was not John Kerry, but for 24 -- and all of a sudden it just sort of was out there. We didn't report on it. New York Times didn't report on it. But then, Kerry decided I got to do -- it's getting some traction in some corners. And then, at some point, you know, the news organization I was at I said, "Look, we have to report that the Kerry campaign is panicking on how to deal with this." That is a fact. And then, I remember -- so he goes on Imus the next day, and says -- and does it and debunks it and said, "Look, it's not true" and dah, dah, dah. And the Washington Post wrote a story that said, "John Kerry denied having an affair. He says it's not true." I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. You never reported it, and now you're only" -- sort of like, is it factually not true? You have found out it is factually not true. Nobody ever reported that it was just simply factually not true. They worded it in a way that made it sound accusatory. Now, obviously, we're all cynics in how we cover American politics and we assume, at the end of the day, every rumor, there's probably some truth to it somewhere. In this case it was a pretty -- if you want to say, okay some intern was having an affair with somebody that worked for John Kerr and that was the grain of truth. It almost took down a Presidential candidacy, out of nowhere, which, by the way, would have given the nomination to a guy named John Edwards, we'll leave that aside, at the time.

[Laughter]

MR. TODD:

But, that is a -- so what is the media's responsibility? We chose not to report it at first, but then, we had to report this denial. And I think we are living in a day and age where you have to say, "That is not true. There is a story going around about such and such. That is not true. The President was born in Hawaii." Okay? "The President -- this is, factually, not true."

And so, now we have to do stories in "mainstream media" that are not true. Well does that mean for you? There is -- my favorite rumor always has to do with, either people are manipulating absentee ballots, or the overseas ballots and all this stuff. This is the stuff that gets into your territory, right? So, I think you have to proactively say -- when you see a blogger that might have a readership of enough people to start this rumor mill, you're probably going to have to go out there and say, "Look, no, the overseas ballots were mailed," on such and such date. "They will be counted. They will be counted at the correct time," you know. That it is -- I see it, unfortunately, as our job. We have to do it as much as we can, but you guys have to do as much as you can.

Now, the downside is you don't have the resources to deal with all this media incoming and dealing with this stuff, and that you got to go to something called the Elections Assistance Commission and demand more help. Did I say that?

DR. KING:

One of the obvious distinctions between social media and traditional media is speed and brevity. So, that's often what's focused on, the 140 character limit in Twitter.

MR. TODD:

Um-hum.

DR. KING:

Are there other more institutional differences that would be
instructive for people to understand about social media's role as a
journalist venue versus traditional journalism?

MR. TODD:

Well, look, I think it's a faster -- I mean, it is a way to get information
-- don't assume it's the only way to get a piece of information out.
Don't assume that just because you put it -- you threw it up on your
Twitter feed, that it doesn't mean you don't put it on your website, it
doesn't mean you don't send out an e-mail release to the local
media about whatever it is that you're trying to get out there, either
debunking a local myth that got started about something, or
something proactive, like, "You have to, you know, register by such
and such a date if you want to participate in this primary coming
up." So, you know, don't assume it's the only venue, number one.

I guess, you know, the other thing is, you know, don't -- the
expectation on Twitter is to interact. So, I think the mistake, a lot of
people make on Twitter, is that they just see it as a one-way
vehicle, and so they throw the information out there. But, by
interacting then, they know you're reading it. They know that you're
communicating through it, so it's a way to sort of build some trust
with your "followers" and build your credibility. And, you know,
more than anybody who needs trust and credibility more than the
people in charge of counting ballots. So, you know, the -- don't just
start a Twitter feed and throw information out there. Use it --
answer questions. Answer everybody's question. Then, when they

reply to you, "Well, you know, how do I" -- look there's going to be vicious and mean stuff that gets through. You just ignore that stuff.

But it's a two-way communication. The expectation is if you're on that, you're going to communicate in two ways. And so, that's probably the one thing I think people will miss at first, it's not just a wire service.

DR. KING:

Okay. One of the jokes in election administration, the election administrator prayer, "Oh Lord, don't let it be close." Often, at the end of an election there's a collective sigh of relief in the elections office, "We're through this one," and, of course, the event that can undo all of that is the recount. And the recount is -- can be problematic in a couple different dimensions; it's compressed, it's highly visible, everything is now kind of distilled down to this one race which is, by definition, close. But recounts also have unintended side effect of illuminating errors that occurred in the election. So, it's not just about a recount, it's about a recount and then, what may have happened during the election that contributed indirectly to this.

From the media's perspective, do you prepare differently for covering a recount, in terms of researching election procedures in that jurisdiction, election technology? And if so, how is that preparation different?

MR. TODD:

Well, I mean -- well I'll tell you this. I mean, in a Presidential election, or in a race that we know is going to be close, we always

look up the recount procedures, because we got to -- particularly, in the post 2000 world, you got to know about it instantaneously.

And so, I can tell you how we prepare at NBC. We have an internal election book, where we share with all the producers the recount procedure of the eight closest States. That's, you know, how we did it in '08. That's how it was done in '04. And this is, basically, because of the 2000 experience. So yes, it's -- and we go through it and simply -- and it's more just the basics. It's usually the five to top eight line basics of whatever it is; when do you have to file? When is it automatic? What percentage is it automatic? What percentage is it paid for? All of those things, the different variances that each State have with the recount procedure.

I think the interesting thing about Twitter, and about social media in general, and it's all grown together, this idea that, basically, there's a lot -- the world of journalists is a lot bigger, right, and you have political activists who act as journalists. You know, activist journalism I call it. It's a form of journalism. It is -- but, you know, they're wanting to -- they're pushing an agenda. And, when it comes to recounts -- now that every -- it feels like so many States, where one State Senate race can decide control of a State legislature, it is -- and there's just now more eyeballs on what you're doing, and I think now -- the politicization of recounts is, obviously, getting worse and worse.

If you were to -- and you don't have the resources to do this, but -- and you're right, what it does, is, you get the unintentional, "Wow, there's really that many over votes," in such and such? "I didn't know there was this" -- look at what Florida taught us. I

mean, we were like, "Really?  We're still doing punch cards, here?  We're still doing this here," you know?  So, I wish every State, at least did one major recount a year, a Statewide recount regardless of -- simply to find the polls.

My -- here's my problem, right, and it's how we legislate, unfortunately, in this country, in State, local, at federal level, right?  We legislate when there's a crisis or when something, you know -- we create the Homeland Security Department after 9/11.  We pass this most recent -- the whole reason you've been created was passed, why?  Because of the debacle of the 2000 election.  We are a reactive legislative mode, and we decided we had holes in our system only after 2000.  Well, there's been holes in the system for 20 years, for 50 years, for a hundred.  I mean, you know, you could make that argument.  So, you know, why not proactively, at least on a State level, talk about your error rates.  "Well, this year we found" -- you know we -- you know, if you did it on one Statewide election every year, sort of, forced everybody to go through the process, number one, it's a good drill for everybody to go through.  Number two, you'd find out -- hopefully, you'd find out holes before it gets exposed, when there's 50 cameras on you.  I mean, to this day, is there a more iconic picture than that dude in Broward County holding up the magnifying glass?  It's like, you know, you want to -- you know, so again, that costs money, and I know in these times finding money to correctly count ballots you would think would be the -- you know, it's like the one thing we should all be willing to spend a little bit of money on, but so be it.  Go through the drill.  Find the holes before we all decide there are -

113

- we in the media, do this, sort of, crisis way of doing it. So, I mean, I think that would be a helpful start.

DR. KING:

Okay, I'd like to now open up more of the discussion to our panel members. And, are there any questions from the panel that you'd like to address to Chuck regarding elections coverage and invite him into your jurisdiction on the next recount?

[Laughter]

DR. KING:

I'll put a question forward to the election officials that may generate some discussion.

One of the consequences of the shrinking of the economy and its impact on the media is that there are fewer reporters and there are fewer specialized reporters that cover elections. So, often, people that are assigned to our shops cover elections, it's their first rodeo. They often don't know the questions to ask. But, they're pretty smart in that they know who has the data. So, we're beginning to see more and more requests for, example, direct feeds off of our election management servers, you know, all the security issues that that implies, and our own understandable reluctance to release data in real time before we can vet it and make sure it's correct.

But perhaps you could talk about things that have occurred in the most recent election cycles, 2008, 2010, that marked changes in the way in which you interact with the media and whether it's through the use of social media or preemptive, as

Chuck pointed out, preemptive work with the media making sure that there's a relationship there before the event.

And I see Chris nodding his head, so why don't we start with Chris, and then, kind of work our way around.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Start with Florida.

MR. TODD:

Clay County optical scan, right?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Optical scan since '97.

MR. TODD:

Yeah, it's sad that I can still remember which counties were…

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Yes, yes. You know, I was speaking with Dana at lunch, you know, there was a lot of good that came out of 2000; protocols, procedure, uniformity with that, social networking lends itself very well to that process, establishing those relationships with the media in advance of the fire, being open, transparent, using all of the tools necessary for a vehicle to get the word out.

A couple of things came to my mind when you were lamenting on what you would like to see. The State of Florida has taken an active approach into a unified/uniformed reporting, almost an XML, if you will, to allow the media access into that data to where it would be uniform across all 67 counties to expedite getting that data, those reports out to the media, not only the media, but, of course, the public. Social networking, as we talked before with Jerry Holland in Duval County, with him setting up the stage in the

recent mayoral race, which was a very large race in Duval County,

for that, to where he set the expectations of reporting in Twitter in

advance of the polls closing, this is the schedule that we're going to

set in place, and this is what we're going to keep to get this

reporting out to you on a timely basis for that.

So, to the question, how is social media changed, I think it's

changed the relationship for the better.  Hopefully, again, the State

is viewed that it's very open into the process, it's very transparent.

We conduct open houses to the media to answer those questions

about that data, elections jargon as to what exactly this means.  We

conduct mock elections to show them the processes in place to,

this is how we tabulate.  When we talk about an under vote, what

we're really talking about is a contest that wasn't counted, or a

blank ballot, if you will, for that, with regards to an under vote.  And

to educate, not only the public, but the media, as to what exactly is

the process, in advance of the night so, it's very clear as to what

our roles are, and what tools and resources that are available to the

media.

So, I believe that, by and large, that's what social networking

has afforded us to do.

MR. TODD:

And, you know, it's funny when you bring this up.  There's a phrase,

it's not mine, and I can't remember who originated it, but this day

and age in media, and I'd say, in this social media, meaning social

media, not Twitter and Facebook, but when I think of it now, to me,

it's this idea that we opened up -- media is open to all of us in some

form or another.  I mean, look, when you guys are putting out

116

information, you're a form of -- it's a form of journalism, right? You're sharing information.

Transparency is the new objectivity. It is what -- in the media world, the strive and the post -- particularly post-Viet Nam, Watergate, you know, objectivity, objectivity, objectivity. Now, people have given up on this idea of objectivity, for better or for worse. I say for worse, but it is what it is. There's a lot of people, particularly the activist political community, who you guys are going to be interacting the most, besides the media, right, it's going to be the activist political community.

The way to gain credibility is transparency on everything. And so, if you -- if that is -- if you have that as your mindset, it will build the credibility that you want to have with both the media that you're interacting with, but actually also the activist media, the political activist community, who can be the ones that can drum up problems, unfairly sometimes, sometimes fairly.

DR. KING:

I want to follow-up, Chris, with a question, and then come down to the other end of the table. You mentioned, in a county in Florida, the plan, if not promise, to do scheduled releases on social media of election night results. Do you see the potential for problems with that? Once that commitment is made, nature abhors a vacuum, and so, if you're committed to report something, even if you're not, perhaps, ready to report, you may feel pressured to release information that has not yet been vetted.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

I think that with regards to, you know, your schedule is going to probably be much different in a Presidential election, as it was in a mayoral election. What I'm saying is, early on, in the process, to set what those timelines are. For Jerry Holland, those timelines were every 15 minutes. In a Presidential election, Jerry might opt for every 45 minutes. Again, it's laying out the ground rules, as the expectations to meet for that. I think if you're realistic with determining what those timelines are going to be, on the frontend, and, of course, make them achievable for that. Now, does that mean that there could be some sort of a calamity? You could lose your T1 or your Internet access, to not be able to put that up, and so, you may not meet that goal. But I think that's fairly understood.

MR. TODD:

That's the thing, tell us.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Yeah.

MR. TODD:

Report that, you know, "Hey, our service crashed" you know. "We're counting the ballots. We don't have it yet. You're going to have to be patient." Then, it gets rid of that air of uncertainty, because the more there is uncertainty, that's when the political conspiracies begin, and that's when campaigns can just start -- be banging on your door in some ways that you don't want.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

And again, to the point earlier, about mobile computing, you know, then you pick up your BlackBerry and you tweet, "Hey, you know, we lost our Internet access at the office."

MR. TODD:

There's always a way, online, yes.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

"Here's the latest, you know, return that we have."

DR. KING:

Okay, Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

On the question of how things have changed, and certainly, over the decade view that was just being talked about, you know, everything has changed, so much has changed.

But, even just in the -- my position, as having such a thing as a spokesperson for our agency, sat vacant during the off year. And so, when I came in toward the end of 2010, I had a media list from the 2008 election to update. It still had fax numbers on it. It didn't have e-mail addresses for everybody, and it, certainly, didn't have anybody's Twitter handle. Those kinds of changes in -- and that's, you know, our -- I think our office was pretty much, right there, in the game. It wasn't like we were really behind things I don't think, in 2008, as far as the, you know, the norms of what's across the field. I think that's probably pretty reflective in a lot of cases of the -- you're talking one event to the next. We didn't have any elections in the off year. So, the last time we did this, the last time we've had this enterprise of an election, the whole way we communicated was totally different than what we had to build in 2010. And so, I think that's a dramatic change.

On the discussion about the open source nature of Twitter and the value of that to the press certainly is huge. The value of

that to us is also huge.  Even just in seeing the evolution of the tool over our election cycle in 2010 and how we were able to use it, but also, how we saw people using it, and how we saw the press using it, we were able to get those conversations about, "I wasn't able to -- I wasn't allowed to vote in this precinct, they told me I had to have ID," or "They're having some kind of problem with the voting equipment in this precinct."  We got that stuff off of the hotlines to the advocacy groups, and off of the media's own direct websites and into Twitter, where we were seeing it all in one place using a hashtag, too.  We were able to see more and more of that in one place where we were able to have -- not have to get into a turf war with the press, over, "Are they calling your hotline, or are they calling ours" so, we know what's going on when, you know what's going on, and not in that sort of a "gotcha situation" but able to just share that information, and all see it at the same time, and be able to engage in that dialogue.  And that was, really, where our interactions directly in that, to be able to engage in the rumor control, to be able to see a tweet about a problem at precinct 34 and within five minutes be able to tweet back, "We've investigated the problem at precinct 34.  Our field representatives say this is what happened."  Problem solved.  That dialogue being able to happen, in real time, is an incredible benefit to us, just as it is to the press.

DR. KING:

Okay, you raise an interesting issue, perhaps, that somebody ought to have a hotline when the elections are going on.  And, perhaps historically that was the media.

MR. TODD:

We do one and we all -- you know, we partner with, you know, we partner with different organizations at different times that come to us. And we're always trying to, you know -- you do your best to vet an organization and make sure they're as bipartisan as you can get. I'm not always a believer there's pure non-partisanship, but as bi -- you know, because there's always this, you know, you don't want -- you don't want somebody trying to take advantage, simply because they want to keep the polls open longer, you know, the poll closing times open, and create a lawsuit and all this stuff. And you don't want to look like you're being manipulated as part of somebody's agenda and all this stuff.

So, that always said, I mean, it is helpful. I mean, look, it was one of those hotlines that we first heard about the "butterfly ballot," you know, in Florida. Now, that turned out to be just a bad decision by the Election Commission, you know, that creates a ballot, but -- ballot design, but it is helpful.

The question is, should it be individual media organizations doing this, when our credibility is about zero with a lot in the public, you know, or it might be great with some people and horrible with other people? Should it be an entity -- you know, should it be some sort of shared entity? Should it be a collective of some sort? Should it be a partnership?

You know, it's funny, it's like -- I think it's weird, for instance, that we count ballots separately from you guys, you know. In hindsight, that makes no sense when we're all wanting the most accurate number. Now, should we be there to observe? Yeah.

Should you have it there as a -- should we do it together, in some formula?  So, on this stuff, on election hotline stuff, what's wrong?  This should be one -- this is something that we should all be doing together, you know.  In my case, I should make sure that Fox News and MSNBC do it together on something like this, because, at the end of the day, everybody wants the vote counted correctly, right?  So, they should use the same hotline.  Automatically that would give that hotline more credibility.  And, you know, frankly all of the -- everybody should be -- we work a consortium that shares exit poll data, so, why shouldn't we do that and share it with you guys, have the same hotline so that it isn't two feeds of information, or four feeds of information.

You know, part of it is, there's this work sense, and it's the people I work with, it's my producers, who will -- you know, and news folks who will say, "Well, we want to be first with discovering some problem," as if it's a breaking news situation.  Who cares?  If there's a problem, we should all know about it and alert folks that there's a problem.  I don't want to be the first reporting a fire on air, I want to be the first one to tell the fire department there's a fire, you know.  So it's a -- this is a -- where I think the rational way of doing that, you go to this hotline.  That's something we should all just like, look, let's just -- the two parties, the two major parties, all the -- even the minor -- you know everybody should have this in -- should be figuring out a way to do just do it in one place and have it done.

DR. KING:

Okay, Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I don't think any of these issues are unique to social media that we've talked about, I mean, and maybe we have it better in Kansas City than other places, but we have good relationships with the media. And I think the only thing that's happened over the last few years is there are fewer of them on the newspaper side. My observation has been on the TV side, local TV news, they are more likely to cover a rumor, and then, they all cover what everybody else covers. So now, you're doing it four times, because it's already been on the air.

I think the thing that has changed is, really, who is the media? And I think that's evolving as well. And -- for instance, we have a guy who is a blogge,r who I would have said, "No, not the media" four years ago. But he's very well respected. And he looks more like media the way he is now. But the good news about that is, this isn't sports. The media doesn't really get any kind of advantage over a regular citizen. I mean, there's no special locker room privileges or anything you get by being a media member. There's only certain people who are allowed to be at the polling place, and media is not one of them, at least in Kansas law. I mean, they're allowed to be accommodated and that sort of thing. So, for us, I think it kind of gets to the transparency. If we were focused on being responsive to citizens and responsive to voters, then the media is going to kind of fall into line with that approach.

So, these issues that are being said, we really don't have those. I mean, I don't know if we're just lucky, but I don't think that it's as big of a deal, at least in Kansas, as it could be elsewhere.

DR. KING:

I'd like to get Martin's read on something. Martin manages a blog, and we've heard Chuck say that the distance between traditional media and social media is diminishing. Do you see your role as significantly different? Or, how do you see your role as a journalist and a blogger?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Well, I guess, to give the back story, because you didn't hear this, so, on April 26[th,] D.C. had a special election, and I had been writing for dcs.com for five years, which is a group blog covering local politics. But, for the special election, I decided, well, you know, the local media market in Washington, itself, is relatively small. There's only so many reporters, there's only so many beats to cover, so, if there's one thing I can corner the market on, it's going to be a special election that we're only going to get ten percent turnout, that is, you know -- but it's going to be interesting, it's going to be exciting, and I'm going to get access, because I'll be the only person doing it. So, it's what I did, and I did it under the guise of a blogger. And I've always been a very opinionated writer, but over the course of this project developing, I did, kind of, step back from the opinions and -- because I realized that there are certain technical parts of the process that should be respected. And I got great assistance form Alysoun and the folks at the Board of Elections and Ethics to do this.

So, I would say, what I realized along the process, especially when it comes to local elections, is, because the media is smaller, because there's not enough beat writers out there and things like that, it's giving people like myself, bloggers, people who don't do

this full time or kind of dabble in it, is giving them more of a chance to step up and play a role.

Obviously, you know, this is where it's interesting because, like we've all discussed, anybody can be a blogger, anybody can claim to be a journalist. But, of course, you know not everybody is going to be objective or at least fair and balanced, I guess, for lack of a better term. But what Twitter does, I think, there is an enforced sense of responsibility and reputation. You do, slowly -- I mean, people will get to know who you are, and they're going to get to know whether they can trust information that you're putting out there or not. If you're constantly pumping out rumors, you might get the retweeted, to begin with. People might believe what you have to say, but after a certain amount of time, they're going to be like, "This guy is a clown, he keeps retweeting things that aren't true. We can't trust him."

And the one thing that I think we did well for the April 26 election that, I mean -- we didn't plan it, it just coordinated well, we created a single hash site for the whole thing, which was four26dc and relatively -- I mean, it was a small population of people that used it, but it was an active population that used it. So, everybody could find the right information where they needed it, they could find it easily, and you knew who was involved, you knew who was on whose side and who to trust. And, of course, this is a very -- we're talking about a small -- a relatively small city, small election, so it was kind of easy to navigate this. I mean, I can't imagine on a county level, where you're dealing with significantly larger numbers of voters.

And just one other thing I'd like to comment about what Chuck said. What's interesting about how Twitter was used on election night itself, it was used not only on April 26th but in the primary last September, here in the District, was that -- the way I looked at it, it was sort of like if the Board of Elections and Ethics came in with all the ballots, dumped them on the ground, and let everybody at it, because everybody was like -- essentially, everybody was tearing and grabbing their ballots and saying, "Precinct 114 Mayor Adrian Fenty wins by, like, four votes." And, like -- and so, bit by bit, this stuff was flowing out, and it was interesting to see how it developed, because you never got a sense of who was where until the Board of Elections and Ethics finally came out and said, "This is where it is. This is what the results are."

MR. TODD:

It's funny you bring this up. There's some primary nights I just ignore Twitter. You can't read your feed. I use it to dump out information that I might know that I feel like, okay, look, I'm getting a feed in here on the special election, but it can get -- I know exactly what you're talking about, on the mayoral night. It was like, you know, this is -- I mean, you know, particularly, if it's your own local election you say to yourself -- I think they're coming up with mute functions on Twitter, right, where you can mute certain folks, you know, "I'm muting this person tonight," you know. I like following them, but I don't want precinct by precinct updates, you know.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Right, because, also what happened in D.C. is, most people, they

still go down to the Board of Elections and Ethics office and watch

the returns from there, because they feel like they can get the

results first.  But at the same time, you know, precincts are closing

down, they're posting the results outside the precinct, someone is

tweeting it.  But, in between the time that they're tweeting it and the

truck that's carrying the ballots actually gets, so that the stuff can

get tabulated formally, you've got -- I mean, you've got precincts

coming in from every which direction and people, you know, calling

elections based on the fact that four different precincts, out of 143

in the city, have reported and they reported a landslide for one of

the candidates.  So, I mean, I think there was people that called the

election, like, 65 times over the course of a four-hour voting

process. I mean, so...

DR. KING:

Okay.  I'd like to ask Dana to help us start talking about retweets,

and the implications.  So, if you would, kind of tell us about

retweeting from a social phenomena, and its implications.  And

then, I'd like to bring it around and finally ask all of you, but then,

Chuck, what is the implications when you retweet something, as an

election official, or as a blogger, or as a member of the media.

MS. CHISNELL:

So, the way Twitter works, is, you make a tweet.  It's 140

characters long.  So, you press "send" and it goes out to everyone

who follows you.  Sometimes you might get replies back.  There's a

way to do that, too, for people who follow you.

But, there's also this mechanism where you can retweet someone else. So, somebody is coming -- they've tweeted something that you're received in your feed, in your timeline, they call it, you think this is interesting, I'm going pass this on to all of my friends, all of my followers. And so, you hit a little button that says "retweet", and it gives an "RT" at the beginning, and the rest of the characters are the message.

If it's a well-crafted message and they fit in under 140 characters, you're pretty clean. One of the pitfalls is, if it doesn't, and your message is too long to be sent, then editing happens and things can get a little distorted if everybody is not careful, and now, we're into the Twitter equivalent of the game telephone. And as you can track that tweet back, you might see, ten generations later, that it's quite different than how it started out.

But the idea is, this is what makes it -- any given tweet, what gives it a viral quality, is that passing on of the message. So, you have to be careful what you're doing there, because that's -- you're determining who it goes to and what it says. You control that message as much as the first person did.

DR. KING:

Okay. And do you think there is an implication of endorsement?

MS. CHISNELL:

Absolutely.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah. You're saying, "This is interesting, or this is newsworthy, or this is important, or you should see this," and so, there's an implicit message of that when you retweet something, yes.

MS. LAYSON:

So, even though you see various elected officials, election officials, journalists, state, "retweet does not imply an endorsement," you think that's still..

MS. CHISNELL:

I do. I think -- well, first of all, that part of the message goes away, because the context is lost of who originated it. And there are people in the world who don't know who Chuck Todd is. So, even though he might have this policy that says, this does not constitute an endorsement, three generations of that retweet on, people may be seeing that tweet who don't know the source, who don't know where the tweet came from to begin with, and so, don't know that you have this personal and/or professional policy, that that exists. So it does, it's a de facto.

MS. LAYSON:

I'd also be curious to know if anyone here sees a difference between following others and retweeting. Do you equate those or is there a difference?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Oh sure. No, I follow, as a matter of policy, every single candidate for office in our jurisdiction. I never retweet any of their stuff, as a matter of policy.

DR. KING:

When you say policy, Alysoun, is that an articulated policy?  Or is that…

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Actually, no, it's not in a written Word document anywhere.  It needs to become so.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

It's a punk rock thing.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

It's a very punk rock thing, yeah.

[Laughter]

MR. TODD:

See, this goes to what I told you is that I do think everybody has a solid policy on various things when it -- but it's not the same.  It's not uniform, you know.  It's kind of like voting.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MS. LAYSON:

And, again, I would tell everyone that the Environmental Protection Agency has a really good written policy about these things, because it can get confusing.  I mean, you want to follow people who are in your field or covering, you know, the subject that you're interested in, your stakeholders are interested in, but what does that imply if you follow them.  So...

MR. NEWBY:

Yeah, I would even say that there are -- the other value there is seeing who follows you, in terms of putting -- they can put you on lists.  And lists sometimes are cool, but other times, lists can be, I

guess, you know, blasphemous to a candidate, for instance. And

now, you are part of this, and the only way to get out of it, is,

actually, to not follow the person who has put you in that list. And

so, being able to monitor that is pretty important. So, I mean, that

kind of goes beyond policy, but it's important to watch what other

people are doing with you, once you've decided to follow them.

DR. KING:

Okay. Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I don't know, I've thought about that, and chosen not to worry

about, it, chosen not to worry about who follows me or chosen not

to worry about what lists are out there. And maybe I'm wrong in

that. Maybe somebody has had a bad experience where

somebody -- where an issue came from them being on a list. But I

sort of look at it the same way I look at the candidate fundraising e-

mail list that I get on, you know. And, I'm, obviously, never going to

give them money, you know. But as long as I don't do that, as long

as I never correspond directly with them and reinforce that

relationship, then I choose to sort of interpret it as one of those

things where the users of the service all really understand, or

should understand what that means, or it's fairly easy to explain

that I didn't have any control over who chose to follow me or put me

on a list. I don't know if others see it that way.

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I'd have two things there. One is, we had a candidate who

was -- he was controversial, I guess, and so, a lot of people didn't

like him and were hoping he wouldn't win. He had a lot of

supporters, but there were a lot of other people who hoped he wouldn't win. And so, some had created a fake Twitter name for him, and then, created a list of people who have jobs I'm sure I could do, you know.

[Laughter]

MR. NEWBY:

And so, then, I was in that list, as well as every elected official in the area. And so, I'm sure that he would find that list, and then wonder if I was kind of agreeing with this group of not liking him. So, that's where I do think it falls into that.

The other is, you tend to have a spam issue with Twitter. You do, actually, with all social media, but you'll have people who might follow you. You do need to check it, because, often, there will be -- the signal there is, if they only have one tweet.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah.

MR. NEWBY:

And you check their profile and you turn -- it turns out to be something you would not want tied to your name. And the thing is, is that other people may look to see who follows you, and even though you really didn't have any control over that, that they decided to follow you, you can have them unfollow you, and in doing that, you can, at least, keep clean your followers. So, I do think managing the list...

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah, I think…

MR. NEWBY:

…is sort of responsible.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah.

DR. KING:

Okay, Chris?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Thankfully, in listening to some of the stories, in Clay County, we haven't ran into that type of problem for that. As a policy, anyone who wishes to like our page, can do so. And there's a wide variety of individuals and their causes that have liked our page over the time for that. I think that what speaks loudest for us is our posting, taking part, from our end, into their groups or concerns.

When we were talking about retweeting earlier, absent of this event, since our account has started a couple, three years ago, we retweeted twice for that. So I think that, you know, by and large, we have abstained from that. I know that as I look, now, "input being sought on Florida redistricting", is something that the office is retweeting, right now, as we sit here, because that's very important. I know that's one of the items that's coming, right now, is a way to engage the public into the redistricting process for that.

So -- but I've taken a lot of notes about the list and the followers and what not, from the discussions.

DR. KING:

I think I'm starting to agree with Alysoun, I may not just think about it. I'm afraid what will happen.

[Laughter]

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I do worry about that in the context of Facebook, though.  I don't

worry about it so much for Twitter, but on Facebook, I don't really

like the idea of having a Facebook page that you don't allow

comments on, because I really don't see the point then.

MS. CHISNELL:

Right.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

But Facebook comments are on your page, not just something that

somebody else chooses to do.  And that's one of those cases

where the social media policies that I have seen -- that seem to

have the most value, seem to go there.  Seem to -- it's like you're

creating a user agreement, really, with the people who are following

your Facebook page, who are commenting.  You're sort of setting

ground rules on when you're going to take something down.  And I

think that's important and I think -- we don't have that yet, but I

need to develop it.  I'm going to, you know, develop that to make

sure that we do, in fact, come up with a clear upfront policy on --

obviously, profanity, you take down, but you know, what else do

you take down?

MS. CHISNELL:

Right.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

And I do fully expect that we will run into situations where we may

have Facebook comments that heavily skewed a word or particular

candidate or candidates.  And if we're going to go there, if we're

going to let that dialogue happen, we're going to let it happen on

our page, we're going to have to have a pretty thick skin and walk

into it eyes wide open about the potential for engaging in that sort
of a thing on your own page and how you manage that. I'm
nervous about that.

MR. TODD:

Let me just give you my story. They're sort of -- if you're going to
start down that road of policing, good luck. Okay?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah.

MR. TODD:

I mean, now, an easy way that I could think of it, as far as election
officials would go, is, whatever the rules are at a precinct, at a
voting precinct, you make the same rules. So, no campaigning,
you know. And if anybody is doing campaigning you need to
determine it's campaigning. I mean, I was just thinking about that
as you were stating it, you know. You just say, "Look, it's the same
rules. You can't put -- we don't let people in the ballot box do that.
When you're on our Facebook page, here, in the county elections
office, it's a politicking free zone type of thing." But that said, doing
anything else, I agree, up front policies to make it clear. But it's
tough to sit there and police and you can get yourself worked up for
it. I mean, I -- the blog that we have that calls for comments, you
know, we -- we can get six, 700 comments in a half hour and to
police it, you know, that's a full-time job. I'll say this. I feel as if the
community polices itself. So, when you have -- ultimately, you just
talked about this when you were saying -- eventually it weeds itself
out, you know, the uncredible, the bad.

And, you know, you do have -- on Twitter you have this blocking function.  I don't block anybody.  I wish I did.  There are some people, you know -- and I have a colleague of mine at another network, he goes, "I block people, you know, if they overdo it."  But I feel like, once you start a policy of blocking then, you know, for me I'm, you know -- objectivity and credibility are everything, in my opinion, for what I care about.  I feel that if I block one person, you know, I draw the line, okay, if they threaten the lives of my children, they get blocked, you know.  That feels like a pretty good reason to block somebody.  But if I block people on the profanity front, you know, well, what's -- one person's view of what profanity is, is not another person's view of profanity.

Then, at what point am I, as a journalist -- and I look at it as a 1st Amendment issue, right?  Can I -- I feel like blocking people as a -- if I'm putting myself out as a journalist, blocking people is an anti 1st Amendment, in my head.  I'm like, I'd be really mad if somebody blocked -- you know so -- now, I think it's a different story for folks that are interacting as an agency, you know, as a resource.

So -- and on the retweeting front, look, I -- you brought up the stated -- people that put stated policies on there.  I know I've done it in the past, I've said it a few times, "I retweeted something and the National Republican Party Chairman tweeted out something about a special election, and I thought, wow, they are really worried about that special election."  So, I just simply retweeted it to let my -- what I figured was a -- all of a sudden I got, "Are you endorsing?"  And I said, "No, the point was to let folks

know, look, they're doing this." I didn't have -- and it was large. So, I am careful when I retweet, to try to, immediately, tweet a reason for it, if it's not obvious. Yeah, sometimes you can retweet and it's obvious. Tweet a reason for why I did it, either in the beginning of it, if there's room. And I also do an MT. If I edit, I modify it. I say, "I'm modifying", so people know that I'm not putting out an exact quote and do that.

But again, that's my policy. That's not Andrea Mitchell's policy. She and I both have the same rules as far as what gets on air, but our tweeting policies are different because we don't have – you know we're trying to come up with -- but the minute we come up with a strict policy on how we're going to handle it with Twitter, there's going to be some other entity that we're dealing with anyway, so it won't matter.

MS. CHISNELL:

Well, and the norms and the etiquette and the UI, the user interface, is going to change on the fly, too. So, like you invented this thing called MT, modified tweet, you know. All of these things that we're talking about, the hashtag, that was not built in.

MR. TODD:

I don't use hashtag, because it takes up space.

MS. CHISNELL:

Right, so, you won't have...

MR. TODD:

That's the problem.

MS. CHISNELL:

You won't have those characters.  But none of these things was

originally built in.  They're all -- Twitter is a work in progress, that is

being designed on the fly, by all of the users.  And so, keeping track

of what that etiquette ends up being, like putting something at the

beginning of a retweet that shows your reason for doing it, is a

pretty common thing.  But not everyone does it.

MR. TODD:

And then, now they've allowed you to retweet where you're -- it's

somebody else's timeline you've inserted into them, so it doesn't --

it notes on the bottom, in very small print, that it's -- who retweeted

it, but it's -- that actually can help editorially make it so that

people…

MS. CHISNELL:

Yes.

MR. TODD:

...realize it's not editorially coming from you…

MS. CHISNELL:

Right.

MR. TODD:

...it's coming from somebody else.  But it's -- I read a great profile of

a guy who invented Twitter.  I mean, it's sort of -- it's CB radio.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah.

MR. TODD:

You know, if anybody -- it's the same thing.

MS. CHISNELL:

Well, it's text messaging.

MR. TODD:

It's CB radio. People develop different ways of communicating and rules of communication on CB radio that wasn't in the pamphlet that came with your CB radio, you know, with your instruction manual.

MS. CHISNELL:

But the thing that you want is for people who are following you to retweet you to their followers.

MR. TODD:

Right, that's the reason you're doing it, because you're trying to spread the information far and wide.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yes, yes, so don't use all 150 characters -- or, I mean all 140 characters. Use 120 characters to leave room for the person's name who is retweeting, things like that.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I was trying to do it 130 characters because I know retweet@dcboee takes up ten.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yeah, exactly.

MR. TODD:

There you go.

DR. KING:

Brian, you had a comment.

MR. NEWBY:

Well, you know, we focused a lot on Twitter, and from a policy standpoint, the one that I think is making me wonder what to do the most, right now, is more location based. There's something called

foursquare, where you can check in at certain sites. And I have

gone to the point of wanting to be -- you can be the mayor of a site

if you check in so often, and I wanted to be the mayor of the

Johnson County election office, because I don't want a candidate to

be the mayor of the Johnson County election office.

[Laughter]

MR. NEWBY:

But I do have on there -- there's probably four people who have

commented, "Vote for me," or that sort of thing, and I left those, at

this point, but -- because I think if you take something down, kind

of, to the point -- now someone may later put another post up that

says, "Don't believe candidate "A" because what they say," and

then the link. And then, that's really going to be kind of a new area.

And I think that is going to happen.

But I think one of the things that we're going to do a lot of

soul searching on is do you take the same, and this is what Chuck

said, do you take the same approach that you would at a polling

place with your online locations? Now, the thing is, at a polling

place you have a law that says, in our case, 250 feet. You don't

have a law that defines feet or anything on an online space. So, I

think that's sort of the unchartered area for us, and that's something

I think we're going to see kind of start to explode when we're

looking at, you know, 2012, because that really wasn't a factor in

'08 or '10.

DR. KING:

Let me ask -- everybody here is experienced, and some of you very

deeply experienced, in the use of social media, but many of the

people who are following us on the webcast are at the front of that learning curve. And I heard two different models here, and I know that I'm generalizing, but the model that I heard from Clay County, on your Facebook strategy, is, let's start in, perhaps, a very constrained way, and then, maybe grow the interaction, grow the access, as our experience and our constituents experience instruct us about the best way to manage the resource. And Alysoun, I'm generalizing again, you kind of started with a wide open, and, maybe, then identifying how it might be appropriately conditioned back to the right fit, in terms of not having campaign slogans on the website, et cetera.

If you would, and Martin, I'm going to start with you because you've been in this game for awhile, what advice would you give jurisdictions about either those two strategies, or a different strategy, as a way to approach initiating a social media policy within their organization?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Well, I think it ties into the discussion we had this morning of the punk rock versus the kind of strategic approach. And like I said, I'm straight down the middle on that one. I think, you know, I agree that you can start with social media, you can start with Twitter and you can just develop as you go along, but at the same time, you shouldn't jump in because everybody else has jumped in, without knowing at all why you jumped in. I think you have to have a sense of the power of the tool and how it can be useful to you. And, you know, different institutions are going to approach that differently, and it's going to work or it's not going to work. But there's -- I

141

mean, I see -- from my perspective as a quasi-journalist, I don't think there's any harm in trying.

I think, institutionally, from the perspective of election officials, there could be harm in trying and failing miserably, because that's, you know, certainly an indication of how well they might be doing their jobs. I can see how there's concerns there. And also there's the public trust. I mean, it's much more -- it's taken very seriously. I mean, this is voting. It's not something that you take particularly lightly.

So again, I think we've all -- we've heard the different perspectives and it's tough to say, you know, which way is better, and which way is going to be best, for each institution or jurisdiction.

DR. KING:

Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

And I don't know that Chris and I take necessarily have taken all that different approach in how we've done it. I think we're, maybe sort of, just talking through multiple sides of the same, you know, two sides of the same coin on some of this.

Where we've jumped in, it's not like we jumped in and started throwing out all kinds of content. I jumped in to monitor. I jumped in to listen. I signed in for every kind of social media site I could think of without putting content up, at first, until we decided what we were going to do with it, and started very conservatively. I mean, I haven't gone out and played with foursquare locations for all of our polling locations. We just, you know, set it up for own

office and, you know, uploaded, like, one picture of a voting booth from our early voting site, and had a very sort of, "Are you here," you know, "to vote early?  Update your voter registration while you're at it," or something, you know.

A very sort of -- and with our Twitter feed, too, it was, we started off, really, just by putting up the same content we were putting up with press releases.  Now, you know, we, quickly, got very interactive with that.  I did not want to do the sort of, you know, death by RSS feed approach to our Twitter page, either.

But, you know, I don't think we really took risks content wise. I think we just took risks in the sense of devoting that time to some experimentation, to checking things out and figuring out how we might use it.

DR. KING:

I want to be protective of our guest's time, and I know that you're running close, and so, I'm going to ask one last question of you, and hope that you can stick around, but recognize your schedule. You may not be able to get the responses from our audience.

As we approach the 2012 cycle, it's not unique, but it is special in the sense that we will have, clearly, a highly contested Presidential campaign combined with redistricting, which is its own special phenomena.

MR. TODD:

Um-hum.

DR. KING:

How -- for journalists, as they approach preparation for this election cycle, what kind of partnerships, what kind of collaborative efforts

with election officials would, obviously, make your jobs more effective and easier in the media, but ultimately, would improve the outcome for the voters and the public and the election officials?

MR. TODD:

Well, I mean, we talked about the hotline issue, which is, why is there five or six different ones, you know. Why does the newspaper have one, three different TV stations have one? That seems like one thing that we should be able to unify and get done in an easier sense, where, the idea of a collective doesn't spook everybody, right, doesn't make one side or the other upset.

The redistricting thing, I mean, it's less of an issue for us on a network level. Me, personally, no, it's a huge issue, but what I say is, I can't sit here and say, "Boy, share with me all the maps that you can, share with me all that stuff." I want it, but that doesn't mean I'm going to get it on air, so -- or even get it online. But I would say on the -- on some of this redistricting, I mean, I go back to the whole transparency thing, you know, just opening it up. The fact that you were telling me you're retweeting the fact, that stuff that hey public comment is coming on redistricting. That's a positive -- to me, that sounds like a positive development, right, that sort of information.

But, I go back to being -- figuring out a way to being available quickly and nimble with the information on how counts are done, how -- when certain absentee -- I mean, you know, I hesitate to throw this out there, so absentee ballot requests are interesting to me as a piece of information that I'd like to know about, that tells me which campaign is doing what on a turnout organization. And

yet I hesitate to say, "Boy, you guys need to make that stuff more available." Well, why should you, you know? That isn't your -- if you can provide the information, great. Do I think you should be able to provide it in an open, public way, or some sort of transparent way, so people will have equal access to it, fine, but at the same time, I don't want you so worried about giving me that information that you're not doing the vote counting correctly, or you're not setting up the -- what's going on there. So, while, me, personally, would love to have all the absentee ballot requests that come in and who is doing what and early voting returns, and all that, you know, is that something that benefits the public? I don't know. I don't know that it does, other than, "Here's a problem."

In certain States, I think the State of Florida is this way, correct me if I'm wrong, Chris, but I believe the State of Florida allows campaigns access to early voting information in this respect, not what the ballot -- not that the ballots are counted, but how many ballots have been turned back in. Campaigns can get that information, candidates can get that information, but not the media. You know what I'm talking about?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Actually, are you talking about turnout...

MR. TODD:

Yes.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

…during early voting?

MR. TODD:

Yes.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Turnout during early voting is available on our website at the end of every single day.

MR. TODD:

There's some parts of it are not available, or the number of people that have requested ballots -- there's some part of it that is available, and I thought this was the State of Florida, but it may be other States, the fact that some parts of it are available to campaigns, but not to the media.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I know that's the case in Arizona, of some of the voter history information, the voter records.

MR. TODD:

To me, that automatically creates the opportunity for manipulation of data, and then, it leads to -- I think those -- and some of that's out of your control, these are State laws. That's got to get changed. So, it's got to be one set of rules, you know, between the media and campaign. The idea the campaign -- because then, what will they do? They'll release the information to you, but how do you verify it? You can't verify it to me, because I'm not supposed to have it, I got it from a campaign creates -- it creates an issue. So, on that specific thing that would be helpful, I think, for -- speaking for all members of the media, on any level, on whatever they're doing, that is something that's got to get squared. And I know that -- I thought Florida was -- it may be North Carolina. It's some State I dealt with that has a huge early voting. You know, what, I swear it's Florida, because it just came up…

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Are you talking about absentee ballots and not early voting?

MR. TODD:

Yes, I think I'm talking about the absentee ballot.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Yeah.

MR. TODD:

Because it was such a -- you know, I remember the Rick Scott campaign was claiming this, the Alex Sink campaign was claiming that. They were getting their data, and then, putting it through their own thing. The media couldn't get this data. And, in fact, I remember going on the website and it said, "No, you must have your ID and password." Then, I made a request, and it said, "Well, media, we can't give it to" -- and it's like, well that's -- you know, that's a State law done to protect the campaign. That's not a State law that is benefiting the public.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Absentee ballot request.

MR. TODD:

Yeah, I think that's what it is.

DR. KING:

Okay.

MR. TODD:

So, I know that was a little arcane. But, you know, just get on Twitter. Help me demystify.

Number one complaint I used to get about our campaigns over the last six years, was, I'm going to throw it out there, give me

a minute to get the name of the group that makes the voting machines, the company, Diebold.  This idea that somehow that Diebold is -- you know, anybody that uses Diebold to count for -- you know, that somehow that Diebold was part of some grand conspiracy and that electronic voting is so hackable and so this and so that.  And so, the assumption is that something is wrong already, before, and that this system you know -- and that's -- that, to me is why you guys got to get out there and help demystify, because that Diebold conspiracy, post 2004, in Ohio, wouldn't go away.  And I remember -- I think I dealt with it a good three or four years just simply, "You guys didn't look in" -- I mean, you know, you're like come on, you know?  But, that goes to the demystifying effect of what you guys can help bring to this procedure.

And, let me throw one thing out there at you, because I think this is a tricky thing.  When you think about these policies on Twitter, realize that anybody that works for a Board of Elections, you know, they may be giving up their own -- I might argue, you might want to make sure they give up their own political -- public political persona, you know.  It's -- I don't -- I feel bad for those of you if you've got a member of your staff who runs this terrific blog, but, you know, who's -- or who tweets a lot politically and has very much a political identity, and they're part of the process of, you know, campaigns will try to manipulate that, the activist community. So, when you're developing these policies, think about that for your own staffs, I think that you may find yourself just -- it's just cleaner. It will just be easier.  Sort of tell your staffs, "Sorry guys, don't tweet about politics," you know.

DR. KING:

Well, that is a challenge.  Yes, Martin?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Well, this just ties into what Chuck says.  I think we're talking about the use of Twitter and all these social networks as a way to enhance transparency, but, at the end of the day, I think the institutions themselves, I mean, they have to have more basic levels of transparency built into how they work.  You know, you could have a very untransparent organization that has a fantastic Twitter account and does very well tweeting what little information they'll offer to the public, and I think -- you know, thankfully, I think in D.C. we don't have that.

And one good example is, again, during the special election they had this open period where they say, you know, we're going to be checking every single optical scan and electronic voting machine that we're going to be using for the election, and anybody is able to come, you know, it can be press, it can be media, whatever.  So, you know, I went, and I did that, and I tweeted, and it was a lot of fun.  But, you know, had that element of transparency not been there, it wouldn't have been any more transparent had they said -- had Alysoun tweeted out, at some point, "All the voting machines are AOK, trust us."  So, I think there's that element of, you know, institutionally, we have to make sure that our voting agencies and institutions are transparent, you know, as a foundation, before they can start using these additional tools that make that transparency brutally obvious to the public.

MS. LAYSON:

Would you have trusted a YouTube video?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Would I have trusted a YouTube video? I think -- well, I think any journalist would say that they'd rather be there in person to do the checking themselves to make -- I mean, because, yeah, you could -- any amount of editing can make a horrible malfunctioning voting machine look perfect. So, but I mean, I think -- you know, to a certain extent, we'll give the benefit of the doubt that someone is not going to edit, that severely.

MS. LAYSON:

I think that's interesting, though, that you even pose that possibility, which goes towards that level of trust that has to be built.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Um-hum.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

There's that sort of classic sort of tension, I think, there, between the journalist sort of frustration of, "Boy, you know, you election offices need to be more transparent about things, it's so hard to get information," and then, the election official tension and frustration, "Boy, you journalists never cover us, and it's so hard for us to get our information out." And, I think, we sort of -- we have these few opportunities, these sort of moments and stages in the process where we have that chance to get that word out effectively, and where the journalists are really looking for that information and sort of seizing those moments is the challenge. And while it's one of the things that social media helps us do more effectively, it's also

something that, even if social media didn't exist, we'd be needing to be thoughtful about how we were approaching that.

I mean, in our case, we had really four things I think that we did to sort of seize those moments in this last special election, and the first of the four was Martin and his blog. We didn't have a whole lot of reporters lining up outside our office to cover anything having to do with the special election. We had great reporters. They'd built up a lot of knowledge about our processes and covering us intensely, in our September and November elections, but there were other stories that they had to be covering on a daily basis. And so, what we ended up -- because Martin had decided to have this blog, all the other journalists were turning to him as their source of information, because he was covering it, and he was getting the information out there. And we sort of had this partnership, sort of like this media relations kind of like public/private partnership thing, where we were able to do a -- you know me, get the information out. And, if, at least, I knew Martin had it, and I knew Martin was writing about it, then, when a journalist -- when another one of the journalists was ready to write their piece, it had already been kind of prepackaged for them, because whatever we put out, and then, whatever Martin had expanded on, which, in his case, he was covering the campaigns, he was covering the finances, he was covering all those things. The way we used our Twitter rapid response on Election Day was another one of those moments where we were able to kind of get out there with information that people wouldn't thought to have ask of us but, boy, did they need it when they wanted it, and when they

wanted it, now.  And my being in front of the camera, on the phone with another reporter, really wasn't getting their questions answered on deadline.

And what we did, kind of, ties into what you were saying about boy, you know, you need to get this information out, and Chris was saying that you do this.  We put out an election night reporting plan.  Basically, about like five or 5:30 on election night, we tweeted it out, and, you know, we hadn't really done this before, and it was the timetable for election night and what to expect and when to expect it.  And, boy, did that take a lot of the mystery out of things.  And we had people who had been active in political campaigns, for years, who were writing us back after that and saying, "Boy, there were pieces of your process that I never really understood.  That was really helpful, thank you."  And it was really just sort of, you know, a two-page kind of a thing that was coming out of the collective knowledge of people in the office, that they would have said if they had, you know, just, sort of, had the nice relaxed time to just sit down and talk it through.  But putting it out there, putting it out there in the moment and putting it out there exactly when people were looking for it and just about -- just starting to start complaining about how bad they expected election night to go, you know, really helped to take that story.

And the other one is that we did put out an XML feed of our election results, and while I think there was probably fairly limited -- our IT director did a Google gadget and all these things to kind of get that information out there, a limited amount, I think, of people actually using that outside of sort of the largest, you know, media

outlets. But, again, it kind of showed that we were being

transparent and on top of the game and, you know, for people who

did know what they were talking about, it was pretty cool that we

did it.

DR. KING:

Alysoun, if I could follow-up with a question. Your description of the

collaborative effort that you had with Martin, looking forward to the

next odd year election cycle, 2013-2015, if you found yourself in a

similar situation where there was not the media queued up to

assist, and Martin will be engaged in bigger and better things,

perhaps, by then, would you value that relationship sufficiently that

you may actually attempt to initiate that in the future? Was it that

valuable to your organization?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Like starting our own blog?

DR. KING:

Well, or recruiting a blog, or being invitational to a blogger, to try to

foster that kind of partnership.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I think that's kind of our mindset around all of our media relations,

and all of the -- I mean, there are certain -- there's that smaller

group of people who are really closely following you, and that cast

of characters changes a little bit over time.

DR. KING:

Um-hum.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

And then, there's that broader group of people who are, you know, maybe taking a pass on that story, but they'll see it and what somebody else wrote that day, or just people talk. And so, I think wherever we see that opportunity we seize it and try to make sure that -- I don't worry so much about how many stories we've had written about, you know, what the headline is about, what the early voting dates and times are. But, if there's going to be a whole bunch of stories about what the candidates are saying, then if the reporter knows, you know, enough to be able to squeeze in a sentence here or there that, you know, sort of the, "By the way, polls will be open these days and these times," then, the task has been accomplished. And so, I just think just sort of leveraging what's available and taking advantage of it.

But we haven't had to go out and create that, because it's been there and we've been able to seize it and take advantage of what's there, up to this date.

DR. KING:

Okay, appreciated you coming. Thank you so much. All right, Chuck is going to have to leave us, today. But thank you Chuck, we appreciate your contributions.

MR. TODD:

Yes, thanks for inviting me.

DR. KING:

I want to talk about transparency for just a moment. That's a term that we've heard used several times. And Chuck even mentioned that it's the new objectivity. When I was a young faculty member, I had a Dean who kept saying, "Merle, you need to get your faculty to

take a more interdisciplinary approach in your curriculum

development." And finally, I said, "Larry, what's interdisciplinary

mean?" And he said, "Well, it means, it's good." And often when I

ask people about what do they mean by transparency, it's an

answer something like that, transparency is good. But, we often

don't really talk about what do we mean by transparency, because

most election officials think in terms of execution of the law; what

the law requires, the code requires, the regulations require. We

talk about our efficiency. We talk about our custody of the public's

trust. And this notion of transparency, it's a powerful word, but I'm

not sure it has a well-defined meaning, as we use it freely in the

discussion.

So, one of the things, and I know you're going to have to

leave in just a moment, so I'm going to ask you if you can stay just

to respond to that question and then move on. What is your advice

to election officials as they contemplate within their organization

what transparency means?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Well, I think it's two -- I mean, it's, obviously, the rules and

regulations and laws. I mean, if you don't have the rules and

regulations and the laws in place saying that "X" information should

be made available to the public when they ask, I mean, you could

have a wonderful staff with a fantastic media plan and it's not --

you're going to do nothing but spin your wheels. At the same time,

if you don't have someone on staff who's good at that outreach,

they could have fantastic transparency laws, but if they're not very

good at interacting with the public or they're too overwhelmed doing

other things, again, nothing is going to be communicated particularly well.  I think we're lucky -- we were lucky, at least, with the situation, at least in the District, specifically, that, you know, I think the laws regarding transparency and openness in the local government, insofar as elections are concerned, are pretty good, and the Board of Elections, their staff, has come a long way in terms of developing -- like Alysoun was saying, developing links to the media and also to just to residents.  So, I think it goes hand in hand.

But again, I just want to stress what I said earlier is that if there's not -- if that basic kind of culture of transparency doesn't exist within the institution itself, there's nothing -- you can't put any sort of sheen over it.  It's just not going to work.  And I think the most basic way I look at that is the first election that I got to witness, really firsthand, was last year's primary in September.  And I witnessed it from the room where they were counting the ballots, and there was activists in there, there was journalists.  Just about anybody could go in, relatively speaking.  They had to kind of announce themselves ahead of time.  That, to me, said a lot about the process of transparency, because you're watching these people literally feed cartridges with the votes into the servers that are -- into the machines that are going to tabulate them and then upload them into the server.  They're doing this while they have a lot of very nosey people who are very loud about their objections or their complaints, or have very quick access to things like Twitter.  So, you know, there was a couple journalists in there that at any slight imperfection in the process were tweeting it out to an entire

universe of people that could see that.  And so, I think it puts a lot more focus and intensity on election officials and how they do their jobs.  I mean, I'm not sure if Florida and Kansas have the same thing that you can actually get people into the room where things are happening, but I mean, I think it was an incredibly educational and informative moment.  But from the perspective of an election official, I could see it being one of the most stressful moments of the night, when you're actually counting the ballots, while these people are watching you just waiting for you to slip up, so they can be the first to tell the story.

DR. KING:

That's a very apt description, thank you.  Chris -- oh, and do you need to leave now Martin?

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Yes, I'm sorry, I have to catch…

DR. KING:

Thank you so much for being here today, excellent contribution.

MR. AUSTERMUHLE:

Absolutely, thank you.

DR. KING:

We appreciate it.

Chris, your read on transparency, how does that get translated and articulated in your shop?

MR. CHAMBLESS:

For us, it's wherever there's not a statute in place that prevents us or precludes us from having an individual intimately involved into the process.  And we want to open it up.  There's nothing mystique

that everyone has talked about during various portions of this afternoon and this morning lends itself to skepticism, lends itself to conjuring up thoughts of inaccuracies and improprieties and all of those other misguided thoughts. And so, we work really hard in trying to make the process open. Also, it's a process that happens somewhat infrequently, and so, individuals don't have the opportunity to become educated as to the -- all of the nuts and bolts of the process itself. So, whatever that we can do into bringing people in to our facility, again hosting open houses, conducting mock elections to where they can see that when we talk about tabulating or canvassing or modeming in of the results from the polling locations and certifying the elections and discussing the provisional ballots and all of those things to where in that process to, as much as possible, that they're involved into that process, the process of opening absentee ballots that come back, duplication teams that duplicate absentee ballots that aren't machineable for one reason or another. All of those things lends itself, because then, what they do, is, they go home and they say, "Let me tell you about what happened, what I did tonight. I volunteered at the elections office. And you know those absentee ballots that I heard that are never counted unless the election is really close? Well, you know what? We had thousands upon thousands of those that we processed today." And they become your advocates, and they tell their friends, and so on, and so on.

So, again, the transparency that I'm looking for, is, again, to engage with the stakeholders to educate them to what we do.

DR. KING:

158

Okay. And it's I think important to note that you've been really talking about transparency of process, not just transparency of the information that's derived as a part of that process. And I think that's an important distinction.

Alysoun, we'll work towards this end of the table.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Yeah, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, in so many ways. And you take something like that, that process of duplicating ballots and you have someone just sort of walk in, see that process for three minutes and leave, and you can imagine the sort of notions they come up with, with what's going on. "Oh my God, they, you know, the election workers are in there taking pencils to ballots," you know? But, when you reach out to people and make sure that whatever information they're getting is in the proper context and that they're getting an actual picture of what's going on, then, that's transparency. I don't think that just happening to say, "Sure, you can come by whenever you want to," is really very effective transparency. You really sort of have to package it. You have to make sure to get that information out there in the right sort of way to have that transparency be meaningful and effective.

DR. KING:

And creating an environment that lets the observers or the recipients of the information draw their own conclusions would be a requirement for transparency, not simply what you choose to push out, but revealing the process in such a way that they can come to their own conclusion.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

Absolutely, I mean, you can't -- there's a difficult -- not that difficult. Maybe difficult is not the right word. But there's a balance to be struck between packaging and controlling. You certainly can't control and shouldn't try to control information. But information, really, has to be something that you're constantly thinking about and constantly making sure that when -- and this is one of the kind of great things about Twitter, but that is so scary for people at the same time, is that you have to walk into it knowing that you do not have control of the narrative. When you participate in it, you are -- you're nudging it. You're saying whatever it is that is this little piece of the conversation, "By the way, did you also know this piece of information that goes along with it and that helps explain it?" And there's just sort of a -- there's a constant effort to try to make sure that transparency is in context. It's not shutting down information or not saying you can't have access to this or can't have access to that, it's a matter of just making sure that this really very complicated and -- process that happens over time, where you're only ever seeing one little piece of it, and most people who are engaging in this discussion don't have a very complete picture of how it all fits together, that you have to make sure that you're explaining the other pieces that help put that piece of the puzzle together for them without hiding those -- you don't hide those pieces of the puzzle, you put them out. And you make sure that you put out the pieces that connect to it at the same time as you're putting that one out.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Well, you know, I think transparency would be really easy in life if there were no repercussions.

[Laughter]

MR. NEWBY:

So, if you were a parent you'd say, "Hey, did you take some money from me?" "Well, yes, I did mom." "Oh, okay just wondering." I mean, you really wouldn't be in that mode. And so, I think for that reason transparency is sort of a goal and it's a process. And so, you -- because of what Alysoun said is so true, you don't control the narrative, and forget the social media side on just Twitter.

But as an example, you -- we stamp -- on envelopes that are not counted, provisional ballots we stamp "Not counted" on it, because we figure somebody may, in some open record situation, take some picture of a ballot envelope by one person, and maybe there was one that was counted by the same person and say, "Hey look, there are two ballots by the same person cast." So, we want to control the narrative in that way, in case that ever happened.

And I think the reason I say it's a process, is, the more we can open up what we do and think through that next step, how it would be seen, kind of gets us to that ultimate goal of full transparency, because I do -- really do believe it's a process. And so, that's why I like cameras. The more cameras in our facility, I think the better, for people to see.

And I think, in elections, we sort of have kind of an advantage in that the transparency is good. I mean, what people would see would be impressive. There are probably a lot of

agencies and a lot of organizations that, you know, maybe, would not do well if they were exposed, you know, where everything they did was kind of out there. But we have a benefit of this kind of a jaw-dropping moment if someone walks into our warehouse, or sees the processes and says, "Wow, I had no idea." And so, that's a huge thing that we should leverage as we're going through that process, to become more and more transparent, because I believe it's an attitude, and I think that it's a great thing. It's something we do at our office. But, you have to be mindful that somebody will want to use that to hurt you. And so, how do you think through that so that you're not hurt for doing all the right things? To me, that's the ultimate reason why I say it's a process.

DR. KING:

Okay, Dana?

MS. CHISNELL:

Well, at lunchtime, Chris and I were talking about how when he has poll workers come to the open houses to see how the rest of the process works, they are just awestruck, because all they see is what happens in the polling place, what happens in the precinct, and don't know necessarily the implications of telling someone that they need to use a provisional ballot, and how that gets tracked, and counted, and then disposed, of or stored, and then audited. But, when they get to learn this, it makes them better at their jobs. So, it's not only transparency to the public/public but also helping temporary election workers know what that whole process is about, too.

When I talk about transparency though, I kind of think of a combination of Sunshine and availability. When I lived in San Francisco, I was on a committee that wrote the summary digests of all of the measures that went on the city/county ballot for a voter information pamphlet. Now, a pamphlet is absolutely the wrong word for this document, because it would often be around two or 300 pages long, but our digests were 300 to 500 words long. And in our process, we did the writing and the editing in a public hearing, took public comment, considered the public comment. Then, when we got to a draft that we all agreed on, the Sunshine laws in San Francisco required a 24-hour period where anybody else, who had or hadn't been there, could comment on our draft digest. It's a lot of work to go to to have 300 words that explain the measure that's going on the ballot. But it invited the public there and people really participated in a totally reasonable way. There was no campaigning. They just wanted to get the best neutral objective description for the ballot. It was really helpful.

But, it was also just being available, and I think, to some extent, that's what all of you guys are all talking about, is being open to having the public get information from you and offering up as much information, as much education, as you can give them, not only about what the election is, going on right now, or the process is, but how the department -- how the office works, in general, and who's there, and what it's all about.

So, to your original question, about what do we mean when we're saying -- when we're talking about transparency, I think, sort of, that sweet spot combination of things.

DR. KING:

Okay, Brian made a comment that I'd like to come back and touch on, for just a moment, before we go to the last question, before our break. And there's a lot of different models about learning, and a very simple one that I like is attitude, knowledge and skills, and you do it in that order. If people have the right mindset, then they're open to the knowledge, and once they obtain the knowledge, then they've context to learn the skill, and once they've got all three, they're functioning.

We've talked about some of the pitfalls of social media, and I think Martin touched on it, earlier, that if it's used improperly it will make the organization appear naïve, foolish, hypocritical, et cetera, et cetera. And it seems to me, even though we've talked about transparency as being a goal and a process, it's also an attitude. And it's an attitude of managements and attitude of interaction, that unless it's in place, the use of these social media tools will not fit very well, and it will become apparent to the recipient of the work product coming out that that commitment to transparency that kind of underlies that interaction and the two-wayness of this is not there. And I'm interested, particularly, Brian, in your reaction to that observation, that transparency may actually not be, so much an end product of social media, but, in fact, may be a prerequisite to achieve -- to its proper use.

MR. NEWBY:

Perhaps, because you -- there is a leap. Any social media thing you do, you've made the leap that this -- you're doing something totally new. I mean, really, you're putting yourself out there in a

way, and your organization out there in a new way, and you do probably have to think through, what would those implications be? So, I see that as that -- which comes first, I'm not sure.

I do think that transparency is a bit of a dangerous buzz word, though. I mean, it's great in this context that we've had, but it seems to be one of those words that over time people will twist it to mean whatever they want it to be. And totally unrelated to social media, but we have the ability, in Johnson County, to itemize the tax portion of the mill levy that goes to elections. And I would like to do that. But, within the broader sense, the county -- our county operations wouldn't want to do that because they think that that's less transparent, which, to me, I would think that's more transparent. But I think often you might get into a mode where someone will use transparency almost just to justify whatever it is they were doing in the first place. And soon, you could see transparency being used to keep someone from doing something, where, "Well, in the interest of transparency, I want to protect the voters' privacy so, therefore, I can't do it." You know, but I think you'll start to hear some of that.

To me, it's an attitude, and it's a belief that the more you know about us, you'll see, I mean, we'll make mistakes. We don't think we'll make mistakes that impact elections, and if we do something that's going to impact the process, we'll tell you. But I think we think, the more you see, the more comfortable you'll be. But that is a huge leap that says somebody may see it and go, "Aha, I'm going to use this to discredit you or discredit the process."

And I don't know, that's a balance that I think we work through every day.  I really don't know the answer to that.

DR. KING:

Well, the last question, we've got about 12 minutes before our hard break at 3 o'clock, that I'd like to throw out to the group, during the upcoming election cycle, there will, of course, be very many inquiries from the media about events that arise spontaneously.  And we'll all do our best to prepare and respond to those.

But for the election officials that may be watching this on the webcast, what advice would you give regarding preparing to work with the media in the coming cycle, in terms of your own philosophy about the preparation of a media kit?  If you could, maybe, prioritize the top two or three things that election officials ought to be preparing now, or at least, be prepared to share with members of the media in preparation to the Presidential preference primary, or even municipal elections that are coming up.

And Chris, if I could start with you, and then, work our way around, and then, I think we'll be right at our break.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Again, and I've said it often today, develop those relationships now.  The media industry is no different from our industry.  We're required to do more with less.  The budgets are stretched tighter and tighter.  They have right sized, if you will, their department's smaller and smaller.  And so, again, you have the head cook and the bottle washer all in one room.  And it's important to develop those relationships, to educate those individuals, and then, to let them know what a resource you are to them.  Stress that you're there to

help them get the word out.  As Alysoun said, it's so frustrating when you put together that press release and for the elections geeks that are -- think that the elections game is the only game in town, and you put your heart and soul into this wonderful piece that educates them to the process, and you send that out to the media, and then all you hear is the crickets on the other end, you're wondering, "Wow, how come we didn't run with this piece?  It was brilliant."

And so, again, to set those relationships up, in advance, to let them know, and then again, if there is a problem, and there is some rumor of some issue that's happening, whether it's a polling location that's running low on ballots, or didn't open up timely, or the equipment is inoperable and -- or it could just be misinformation about those things and they hear that, then they are more likely to call you and say, "You know what Chris?  I've heard this story and can you tell me a little bit about it," instead of tweeting automatically that, you know, "We have this issue out at precinct 100 where the poll workers have run out of the building and left it empty," that they're asking you those questions about that.  So, again, communicate, develop those relationships early.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you Chris.  Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I think what I would add to that, and I think that's key, certainly, if you don't have those relationships or there's, you know, there's a new beat reporter, or whatever it is, as soon as you identify that person, bring him in, sit down, talk through, give them whatever

materials you provide as far as your voter guides from the previous year, or whatever information you give out to candidates, and take the opportunity to kind of walk through the process and talk about the jargon, to the extent that you can. And over time -- as the election approached we found there was kind of a window before things really got too horrendous, as far as our own schedules, but where, you know, some of the newer sort of reporters to the scene were ready to kind of come in and talk, and they saw that things were coming. And so, you know, we had that opportunity, and I'm so glad we seized that, rather than, you know, having sort of unknown names or faces as the process really got crazy.

But I think that what I -- and I had to learn this lesson, kind of the hard way, myself. As our process went on, from our September election, our November election and then our April election, the media tools that I had more and more I added. Sure, we had frequently asked questions about stuff, and everybody's got that frequently asked question sheet, about how many voters they have and, you know, how many polling places and -- but having more information about the process, itself, be sort of prepackaged, rather than needing to be written on the fly, I think, is another thing that I've focused more on and I think would probably be very effective for a lot of other elections officials to do, as well.

And another thing is the people. We -- I know -- and everybody has got limited resources. Communication is certainly something that many I think clerks or registrars or election directors feel they really need to -- they need to be the one to talk to the reporter, they need to do it, themselves. And I know not everybody

has got the money to go out and hire themselves, you know, a communications person. But if you've got people in your office that are maybe ready to take on some of those responsibilities, ready to work with you, ready to meet with reporters, with you, someone that you can turn to because guaranteed your crazy, busy crunch time in operations is also the crazy, busy crunch time for everybody wanting to know what's going on. And to the degree that you maybe have people that you can cultivate more to help you with that, maybe you can make your life a little bit easier.

We took that even further, in this last election, and we actually brought in a spokesperson from an entirely different agency to help me out, because I knew, and I had experienced, in our September and November elections, that, just when Twitter was starting to heat up and I would want to be on Twitter, there was a TV camera that I had to go downstairs and talk to, or there was -- you know there are just other pressures of Election Day. And so, we actually brought in the person who handled the -- agency spokesperson for our Department of Transportation, who also handles their Twitter account. And it was a calculated risk, but it was also something that he knew he had the skill set, he knew the tool. And what we found was that having the detailed knowledge of election processes wasn't nearly as important as having the skill set of being able to communicate and to know, sort of, the ropes of the tool and how to use that. And, you know, he was certainly as able as I would be to be able to see, "Here's an interesting question, this is one I'd better escalate," or "This is one that I can go ask the right question of the right person to make sure that we respond

169

effectively on Twitter." And being ready and willing to let go, and to plan to let go, and to know you're going to need to let go and get help, whether it's, you know, somebody in your office or whether it's bringing in outside resources from another agency to help you in a crunch. Or turning to the League of Women Voters, or whoever else it is that you have in your community, who can help you get the word out on things. I think that process of letting go and letting others help you with that process of planning for how you may be able to do that I think would be -- is something we've started to do, we're learning to do, and I think that others may also find to be a valuable experience.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I think it's a lot like, maybe, a salesperson going to talk to a major account, you know. You want to have a benefit. You're going to talk to that customer and you're taking a reason to come and talk, whether that benefit is a new product, or whether that benefit is new pricing, something. So you want to have an actual reason and something that makes that customer, in that case, want to listen to you. And I think the same thing with media. So it's -- in developing those relationships you can -- one of those things is articulating your concerns. There's going to be plenty of things that happen that we can't predict, but we kind of know the key things for each of us that are going to be critical for us, whether that might be a percent of advance voting, and we've got polling place changes,or that sort of thing. So, going there and saying, "I just

wanted to highlight the things that I think are important we're focused on, these are our concerns," I think it's always better with the media to have -- be the first to outline the problem and tell them how you're addressing it, as opposed to them seeing it later.

But the other thing is that for us, at least, that's kind of how the whole social media thing started, because it's one thing to go to a media member and say, "You know, big election coming up and hoping you'll do a little article on getting the word out about the election and it's everybody's public service, they should be voting." Nobody wants to write that story, they've written it a million times. So, that's how we came up with podcasting. That's why we did text messaging years ago, so that we went and said, "Hey we have this great new thing to target young voters." "Ooh, okay." And so, we got a lot of articles on that and it was a ruse, it was a trick. The whole thing was…

[Laughter]

MR. NEWBY:

…that we wanted to get coverage about the upcoming election, raise awareness of the election. And so, we were able to use innovation as a way to do that. And so, maybe Twitter, at this point, isn't going to be that piece of innovation that's going to get attention. But there are other things that you're doing on an innovative level, and that's what I think should be -- you should be leading with. "Coming into this election, we're going to be doing this," or we're going to -- in 2010, we had cameras so you could see things being received and what's going on behind the scenes. I know others had done that, but we were one of the first, but not

the first.  But that was new in our community.  And so, that got us

media attention.  And it's not really us, we don't want the media

attention for ourselves, but the idea is that it gets awareness of the

election.  People know that there's an election.  "Oh, you know, I

didn't even know there was one coming up and I read about this

thing in the paper."  And we can't afford to get the outreach that we

need and that's really the basis for all of that.  So, when we've

looked at media, all of these activities are designed to get the word

out, to raise awareness and raise voter participation.

DR. KING:

Thank you.  Well, we're right at our 3 o'clock hard break.  And for

those that are following the roundtable discussion on the webcast,

we'll be back in about 15 minutes.  And I'll remind you that the

EAC's website at [www.eac.gov](www.eac.gov) will have the handouts -- I'm sorry,

the presentations that were presented today.  And there's also a

form at the website that you can submit questions or you can tweet

us questions at, Jeannie?

MS. LAYSON:

Bready2012.  That's the letter "B," r-e-a-d-y, 2012.

DR. KING:

All right, thank you.  Let's adjourn for 15 minutes and when we

come back, Alysoun, I think, is going to lead our next discussion,

thank you.

***

[The roundtable panel recess at 3:00 p.m. and returned to open session at 3:15

p.m.]

***

DR. KING:

I think we're back.  And to those that have joined us on the webcast, welcome back.  Again, I'll remind you that the presentations from today's roundtable will be available from the website www.eac.gov.  And there's, also, a form available there, if you want to send in questions, and we'll do our best to respond to any questions that we receive in our last session this afternoon.

This last session will be focused, now, on election officials and their use of social media in the administration of election administration.  And at the end of our session today one of the things that I'll be asking each member of the panel to do is to summarize your thoughts for today.  And that's really an opportunity for you to have the last word on what you think is important, relevant, and what you would like the people, who are here in the audience, and watching on the webcast, what you would like for them to take away from today's discussion, from your perspective.  So, we will make sure that we have time for that, at the very end.

Our next presentation is from Alysoun McLaughlin, who is with the District of Columbia Board of Elections, and she's going to talk about social media in election administration.  So, I'll turn it over to you, Alysoun.

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

My talk is divided, really, into two sections.  Jeannie had asked me to speak to the experience of election officials in getting involved in social media and making that foray into social media, and I'll be speaking about it through the prism of my own experience.  I don't know that D.C.'s experience is necessarily typical of what other

election officials are doing.  I think it is not, in some respects.  I think you can see from the title of my presentation, it's about our Twitter handle, DCBOEE and our hashtag four26dc, which was for our most recent special election, which was on April 26, and four26dc became the shorthand that everyone was using.  That's a very Twitter centric set of tools that we were using, and that's actually very deliberate.  We made an intentional decision to go deep into Twitter, and not put a lot of time and energy into developing Facebook or other kinds of social media platforms as we were building this.  I think that is probably not typical.  I think that a lot of other election officials start with Facebook first.  I think a lot of people start with Facebook first.  I think it reflects the progress of the issues that we were talking about, the way we approach them and the way that we use the tools and found value in them.  But I do want to flag that because I do think that in some ways our experience is not totally typical of what some other election officials are doing, and I'll speak a little bit to, maybe, some of the other ways that people are choosing to approach this, as well.

The second half of my presentation is -- a little less than half actually -- Jeannie had also asked me to discuss the elements of a social media plan, or the key elements of a social media plan.  And I had, sort of, a flip reaction to it at first, when she said that which was, "Well, I don't know what they are, I'll let you know when I develop one," because I don't have a written social media plan.  Our agency does not, at the present time, have one.  We need to develop one.  We need to develop some aspects of that.  I think

that there's a lot of good and there's a lot of bad in the way that

social media plans are developed, have been developed, as far as

some of the ones that I've seen so far.  And I think that as I'm

reviewing what others have done and getting my own lessons on

how I think we want to approach that having gone ahead and made

our first forays, I can talk about some of that, as well.

The way we got started with social media was by watching

what others were doing and emulating the good practices and

vowing not to follow the examples of those that we didn't think were

being very effective in the space.  My idol, in this arena, is the

spokesperson and the person who handles the Twitter account for

the D.C. Department of Transportation.  We had a real big

snowstorm this past January or February, and they were just on top

of it.  Snowpocalypse was the hashtag, and they were driving the

conversation on Twitter.  They were getting all kinds of positive

press, in the midst of a situation where you would expect the press

to be negative because, really, the city was overwhelmed by the

snowfall that we were having.  And I felt that what I was seeing --

and the press was really sort of giving them the benefit of the

doubt, and giving them a lot of credit for transparency and a lot of

credit for, at least communicating what was going on, as they were

working in sort of a crisis communications world.  And I found that

to be a really good model for elections and something that I wanted

to emulate, that I wanted to prepare for as we were moving forward

into an election where we were implementing the sun, the moon

and the stars, and we knew that we had a high potential for having

all kinds of things we were going to need to explain, as we moved

into, and then, on Election Day.  And they were interactive.  If you can see the slides that I have there, you can see the exchange where they're retweeting what's going on from others, but they're engaging with people.  They were in a two-way communication with people who were querying with them, and they were also being sort of casual.  There's a tweet at the bottom where you can see they're sort of posing a question, "Does traffic make the Grinch in you come out when you're shopping?"  You know, being causal in the space, which is sort of the norm for communicating on Twitter, and I think people appreciate when you act like a real human being on the other side of the Twitter feed.

This was an example of another regional agency, at the same time, I was very impressed with our neighbors to the north.  Montgomery County, Maryland, had a Facebook page where their fire and rescue -- and it's Facebook, right, so there's comments.  And people come onto the Facebook page for an emergency management agency, and have all kinds of things to say when they're frustrated, and have some very -- not very kind things to say, sometimes, about the agency and about the individuals who are responding.  And what really struck me about them, again, in the midst of, basically, a sort of crisis communication situation, and this isn't the example of it right there on the page, but what I found that they were doing they would have someone make a really nasty comment, and immediately you'd see a staffer posting a comment in return, and you'd see multiple staffers sort of bandying the issue back around, "Hey, is this -- I just checked and this person lives actually in the unincorporated part of the county," so -- you know,

and then, somebody else would post back, "We're on it." And you could see that transparency in action. And it was really a very impressive way I thought to do business as a government agency, in a public space, where you're not only being responsive, but you're showing that publicly. You're not just -- you've got that one-on-one conversation when you're on the telephone with someone, and you can be the most responsive customer service representative ever, but if no one sees that interaction, it doesn't have the same kind of effect as when you're having it in a public space.

And I thought that that was really very impressive, but I also knew that I didn't have it in me. I knew that there was no way, given the resources of our agency, that I was going to be able to keep up with multiple social media platforms and that level of responsiveness on Election Day. I decided that Twitter, I was ready for the investment in. I was ready to engage. I was ready to do 140 characters at a time. Uploading pictures and commenting and staying on top of people's comments, I wasn't ready to do, in, sort of, a first-stage rollout into social media. Maybe, this is because I was doing it without a budget. I knew that I was doing it myself. I knew that I was adding this to my own responsibilities during a busy season. There was no imagination that we were going to be devoting additional resources to doing social media. Others -- I think, maybe, in some other larger jurisdictions have taken an approach towards social media, where they've crafted a policy, at the outset, and they've decided to go ahead and launch a Facebook page, and go ahead and launch a whole set of additional

outreach tools, and maybe integrated that with a media campaign, where they were going ahead and spending some money on filming videos, on packaging videos, sort of developing a budget that they were integrating this into. We did it much more on the fly, and we're building it over time, and so, I think that that's, maybe, a little different than the way some jurisdictions have approached this.

But it's also -- I'm not necessarily a social media evangelist. I don't think that just because it's new and cool and different that everybody should necessarily be doing it. I do think that you should evaluate the tools that are out there, and even if they're great, you may not be ready for them. And that was our decision at the outset. We've since gone ahead and launched a Facebook page, because we decided that we were ready to take that on, but we weren't ready, at first.

And this is my favorite what not to do slide. I should give Metro credit. This is the public transportation agency here in D.C. They have since launched some other Twitter feeds, and they've gotten into the social media engagement space, but for the longest time, all they had was that one-way RSS feed that set up some sort of an automated notification whenever there was a disruption on any one of the lines. And we had a fairly, the equivalent of the snowstorm, kind of a thing, where I saw the D.C. Department of Transportation do so well, we had an accident last year on the Red Line here in D.C., and we had deaths, and we had a major disruption during rush hour to the commuting traffic. Well, nothing on their automated feed, nowhere on social media was there anything from Metro for about two hours after this happened. And

so, all of the communication that was going on with riders, you had riders sitting in cars, and sitting in cars for significant periods of time, and going through, sort of, the old traditional methods of communication and hearing from somebody. They'd be getting tweets from somebody who was watching TV who was reporting what was going on. It was a traditional media reporting things. And the Metropolitan Transit Authority didn't get into the space; they weren't directly communicating in ways that were directly accessible to their riders. And that was, again, something that I didn't want to emulate. If you're going to get into the space, then get into the space in the way that people actually want to use it, because everybody on my train car during that commute was checking Twitter and checking Facebook and trying to figure out what was going on and not finding it.

What we did do was, keep it simple and test the waters. So, when we first started I started exploring social media options using my own personal account, and sort of launched the plan, okay, we were ready, we were going to go ahead and launch an official Twitter feed. And we really just started by putting out what we were already putting out on our website, just kind of putting out a link. And they were all, you know, links to our website of what was available, our "Guide to Candidate Qualification and Ballot Access. Our "Candidate Guide" was the first tweet that we ever sent, just to say, "It's up on our website, we're ready, the season has now officially begun. And by the way, we're launching a Twitter feed, right now." And no fan fare. We just -- we did a soft launch. We just kind of started putting it out and made sure that we didn't make

any -- do anything embarrassing to begin with, making sure that we were on top of things and knew what we were doing.

Within a month -- that was in April of last year -- within a month we sort of did our real launch. We had a filing -- or the first day that candidates could come in and pick up petitions to circulate, and that first day we decided -- I decided, on the fly, really, as I was chatting with one of the -- one of our local reporters who was standing there in the office, right there, at the beginning of the day, and wanted to see who the first candidates were, who would come in the door to pick up petitions, I was kind of joking with him and said, you know, "Maybe, I'll just live tweet it." And he said, "That's a great idea, you know, you should go for it." So, I just started doing it. And it was really easy. It was -- rather than taking phone calls from reporters throughout the day, where I, you know, could expect to have any number of people calling me and I wouldn't necessarily be at my desk, and then, I'd get a voicemail from them, and then I'd have to return it, and to say, you know, "Hey, who's picked up now? Who's picked up now? You know, what's your deadline? Let me go check," I just announced that I was going to do it every hour on the hour. And every hour on the hour I went out to the front desk and I said, "All right, who have we got?" And the way I took notes on that was just by typing it right into Twitter, and that was my record of who had picked up -- my own record of who had picked up petitions. And we got all kinds of coverage of that. This was my ruse, as Brian was talking earlier, that it wasn't like there was anything really new and exciting and different going on. Candidates were picking up petitions, and if you really wanted to

know who had picked them up, you could find out.  But, just by kind of making those notes and getting them out there, we got this, "Oh, hey, wow, check out what the D.C. Board of Elections is doing.  That's interesting, that's new, that's different.  Wow, they're really being upfront with information."  Easiest thing in the world for me to do.  And our Twitter follower account, I think, quadrupled that day, at least, as people started to find out, like, "Hey, there's a new government agency that's doing this, now."

Our next big jump was early voting, and this was, again, something that was real easy to do.  The way early voting worked, here in D.C., we started out with just one location for the first week at our office -- at our office building.  And then, we expanded out to four additional locations before Election Day.  So, I just went downstairs and I just tweeted how many people were in line, you know, a half an hour before the polls were going to open, ten minutes before the polls were going to open, chatted with the guy who was first in line, and got his name, and, you know, what part of the city he was from.  And I tweeted out that, you know, so and so was the first voter who was going to be casting his ballot.  Several reporters picked up on that.  And they didn't have to come down and interview the guy themselves.  It really -- it went over very well.  It was something that people saw as being a very positive thing and we got a whole lot of positive attention for it.  And it was really very easy.

We also put that up on our website.  Our IT director developed a little app for me to be able to go in and just -- we weren't doing this scientifically.  We could see, you know, if the line

was to this point, then we knew it was a ten-minute line or it was a ten-minute wait or, you know, if the line was to that point, it was probably a two-minute wait. It wasn't like we were, you know, using a timestamp here on this. But, it was really very easy, periodically throughout the day, to just tweet what the wait times were and that was huge to people. People really appreciated just getting a little bit of an inside information. They could have called our front desk and we could have slipped the information to our front desk like, "Oh, yeah, you know there's a longer line. Come back at " -- or not come back -- "but you know, you might want to think about coming in mid afternoon, that's usually a slower time." Just putting that kind of information out there, aggressively, was something that voters really appreciated. And we got a whole lot of attention for it, again, just for getting really basic information out there.

And this is an image of our stream from Election Day in September. It was a rough election. We had, as I mentioned earlier, a whole lot of things we were implementing all at once. We were implementing new voting equipment. We were implementing early voting for the first time. We were implementing same-day registration for the first time. We had a whole lot of different things that we were implementing all at once, and with the new voting equipment we had a rocky start in the morning. And we had really an unacceptable number of precincts that had trouble getting open on time in the morning. And you can kind of see by looking at our Twitter stream that I had an update at 6:20 a.m., "Poll workers were on location preparing to open the polls. We have extra poll workers on hand to fill in for cancellations." And then, we jump to 1:18 p.m.

was the next time I got back to Twitter, where I was just was saying, you know, "Press conference at 1:30, you know, in front of our building." And you can see that gap there. In the meantime, my phone was ringing off the hook, you know, my cell phone, my desk line. We were doing all kinds of media interviews, you know. I was on camera multiple times. I just kind of never got back to Twitter. But we had a reporter who we had invited in to just sort of shadow us, was there in the office, and I'm getting information from him throughout the day. He's coming to me saying, "Hey, people are tweeting that," you know, in precinct whatever it is, "that there's this problem, or in that precinct there's this problem." And I kind of had this light bulb moment, in there, that I'd be much more effective at being able to do that rapid response if I was engaging there more directly myself, if I could, you know, get ahead of that in the next election, and not allow myself to get into that -- because once somebody -- once you've got a problem where you're getting multiple phone calls on it, then you're losing time, already, because now you've got multiple people's voicemails to call back and you're just behind the game in getting ahead of the information. And that's what later we were able to much more effectively use the tool to get ahead on.

We talked about risks of occupying social media. And I'm going through, chronologically, through our experience with social media here. And I think that there's a couple of things that I'll just mention that are risks, but I think are risks in a good way, are things that you can think through and you can handle effectively. I think one of the risks of using Twitter, in particular, is that there is kind of

a language and a culture that is very casual, that is very chatty, where there's a lot of sort of people joke around. People have sort of a norm of communicating in much more casual ways on Twitter. And I think that there's a lot of benefit to going there, there's a lot of benefit to not being just sort of the stiff government agency. But, you've got to really be careful with how and when you do it.

And so, in a case like this, we had a situation -- we provide voters the choice of either paper or plastic in the District of Columbia. And we had an active write-in campaign. This was in our general election. Our regulations allow for a voter who is using a paper ballot for a candidate to provide them with an ink stamp to write in their name using that ink stamp, using that hand stamp rather than having to write it in themselves. And we had a write-in campaign that actively had these out in the field. And we did get a call from a polling place that they wanted to know how to clean the screen on their touch screen, because someone had used the hand stamp on the touch screen. And it was sort of a nice -- it was a nice bit of comic relief for us. We were already on top of things for our November election. We were feeling a whole lot better about where we stood in comparison to our primary election, and we got this and we were sort of in that mindset of like, okay, we've gotten through the real crisis communications point, we've got -- we're on top of it. Now, we're ready to start sort of sharing a little bit more information about the process in ways that, you know, are not just, "Here's how we're on top of" whatever the crisis of the morning is.

And -- but before I went out with this tweet, I walked right into our director's office, I talked with him about it, I vetted it. You

know, I talked with other people in the office.  I didn't just hit the "send" button because I felt like it.  I did the, "Do you mind if I do this?  What do you think?"  And we kind of talked about the pros and cons of going ahead and, you know, joking about the day and how the day was going, and decided to go ahead and do it.  And, boy, did our follower count, you know, just about -- it must have quadrupled at least within the next half hour after that tweet went out, because over the course of the day it was just crazy to see, you know, this bit of humor on Election Day of, you know, what had happened in the District of Columbia.  And, you know, there were people joking about, you know, D.C. voters.  And there were people, you know, saying things.  But we decided that, on balance, it was, you know, not a bad way to sort of engage in the space and let people know that we were there and that we were in fact aware of what was going on in the field, whether it was a problem or whether it was, you know, not so much of a problem.

We had -- in our most recent special election, we had a -- and we did allow our poll workers to tweet, and we had a precinct captain tweet that he had a problem with a piece of voting equipment that he solved with duct tape.  And, you know, he had an issue with the leg on the equipment and, you know, we replied back and we did so in a public way, saying, "Way to be resourceful," you know.  We didn't -- it didn't all have to be just crisis communications and, you know, public notice of whatever it is you need to be, you know, public noticing under your rules and regs.  We felt like it was appropriate to occupy a little bit of a chattier space in a chatty way.  And we found that to be -- it keeps

people engaged, it keeps people interested beyond, maybe, just Election Day, if you're sharing some of those tips and tidbits and bits of gossip about the process, as well.

We did -- and I, for that November election, I grabbed a walkie-talkie, I grabbed a laptop, I set up my own space, integrated it into our rapid response system and I made sure that I was going to drive the discussion on Twitter, that I was going to make sure that if somebody was tweeting that there was a problem at such and so a precinct, I wasn't going to find it out from a reporter who was saying, "People are tweeting that." I was going to check the Twitter myself, and be on top of that, and know what was going on. And it really worked. Yes, it's busy. Yes, in the thick of Election Day your phone is ringing. But my phone rang less when I was already ahead of the game than when I was behind the game, because all the reporters were using the same news source as I was, in finding out what was going on on Twitter. And if they were out at the polls and they were seeing it, they were tweeting it. So, I was finding it out as quickly as they could call me.

The next time that we used the -- or another time that we used the unique sort of communications means of Twitter -- or actually this is back into our September election. We had issues opening the polls and we had issues at the end of the night. We had a very slow process. We were -- in addition to the new equipment, we had a new election management system. We had some new procedures we were implementing that just were very time consuming, and so we had some problems getting the word out and really communicating about what was going on on election

night, which we, again, then improved later.  But, in our September election, the next morning I went ahead and started tweeting both that night and into the morning some of the rumor-control kind of things.  You know, we had the word that there were -- just what we were doing through Election Day.  Well, that next morning I went ahead and tweeted, "We weren't too slow in reporting the election results on Tuesday.  We will improve our process for November."  And I put that little chatty hashtag stating the obvious, because we were already skewered for this everywhere.  It ended up being sort of a little self-deprecating bit of Twitter specific humor that we were, really, cut a break then, at that point.  It was like we'd broken the ice.  We'd gone ahead and said, "We get it.  Yeah, we had some issues."  But we did it without having to call a press conference, we did it without having to issue a statement, we did it in a much more low key kind of a way, where all we had to say was two sentences, "We get it and we're going to fix it."  And that was all we had to do, and we could do it via Twitter without having to make a big thing out of it.  And there's, you know, how it played, ultimately.  And you can see there's a little line in there where they said, "We appreciate the self-deprecation."

I'm going to switch to telling a little bit of a story of our April election.  Now, we had the September election.  We had a November election.  With each one of these we stepped up our game.  For the April election, special election, and Martin, who is with DCist, which is one of the local blogging sites here in the District of Columbia, had initiated his own blog that was dedicated to the special election, as he described earlier in our conversations

today. And he launched that blog, which the URL for it was, four26dc, spelled four26dc.com, and I used the hashtag that tied in directly into the title of his blog. We, sort of, very intentionally worked toward an integrated sort of tagline marketing, really, of online communications about this election. And you would see people in their comments on other blog sites, or whatever they'd be referring to the election as, you know, spelled out four26. It was sort of this marketing of the election and information on that election online that developed. And by gearing up for that, using that, we drove traffic on the election, we drove discussion on the election into that hashtag, and into a way where, not only could candidates and reporters and anybody else who was sort of following what was going on with the election, but we could, too, see what people had to say, see what people's questions were, see what people's discussions were about. And we were able to engage with that very effectively.

That's actually a screen capture of Martin's blog, which, as I had indicated in some of our discussions earlier, became a real partnership, where he was the one reporter who was covering everything. He was the only person who went to go see our logic and accuracy testing for our voting machines. And he took pictures and he uploaded it to his blog and he wrote a very thoughtful piece about that whole process. No one else had time for that in the media space. He went there, and then other reporters were able to sort of rely on him as a crutch, but it gave me a tool to get information out and it gave candidates a tool to get information out, as well, that really proved to be really helpful.

We talk a little about our experience with Facebook. And as I mentioned, we really didn't go there. We started a Facebook page at one point. Basically, somebody else in the office, really, wanted to, and I gave in, in a weak moment, even though I wasn't really ready for its care and feeding, and it just sort of sat there. I don't think there were any -- we had any friends of the page who didn't work for our office for several months. But we reached the point in -- a week or two before the election where someone who is very active in the community, I saw a tweet from him saying, "I didn't see a Facebook page on the special election, so I started one." And he started Facebook event and before you knew it, there were over a hundred people attending this event that they were going to vote in this special election. Well so then, I'm like, "Okay, Facebook is happening in our space now. It's time to engage there." And my first step was just to engage on that event page, to upload information -- to join it as well, to upload information onto that page from our website, and then, we went ahead and reactivated our own page, too, to get that information out there, as well.

And I think another lesson for election officials on social media is not to be afraid of letting other people drive. It's okay sometimes if other people are creating an event page on Facebook, and you don't necessarily need to feel like you're behind the eight ball because you haven't done it. You need to make sure that the information that's getting out there is accurate, and that's really our job, but we don't necessarily need to claim credit for it. Maybe it's a good thing is a blogger in your community starts a blog that's

getting the information out.  That doesn't -- that's not a reflection on you negatively that you didn't own that, that you didn't start a blog.  It's okay to let other people occupy some of that space.  Social media is social, by it's very nature, and you don't have to control it, and you can't control it.  So let it happen, participate it, encourage it where it happens.

That's our Facebook page.  That's what we ultimately launched.  And I did go ahead and use the features of Facebook where you've got this ability to be more visual, to upload more pictures.  And so, we did upload a lot more pictures of our process and just pictures of poll worker training and other sort of, you know, just things to that site.

Rapid response was the big Twitter thing, though, for us.  That was where -- this is where the action was, using that official hashtag, and that was our morning encouragement to everyone to tweet their voting experience in D.C. Today using our official hashtag.  Well, we had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of tweets that day using that four26hashtag.  And we had all kinds of people using it to just say they voted.  All kinds of people who would never engage with us before, had never -- and I'd been following who was using that four26 hashtag before, people who had not -- but they were aware of it, they knew it was out there.  And when their moment came to participate in the voting process, they used the hashtag.  And they kind of wanted to be a part of that experience, which was really a great thing.

This is a series of tweets that are illustrative of how we used it on Election Day.  And you can see sort of reading through those

the first one just answering to a query about electioneering, a complaint about electioneering, and we're using this sort of moment to say, "Make sure you alert the precinct captain, first, if you've got a problem. Talk to the person on site," on down through the very bottom we had a -- we had one of those sort of scary moments in elections that everybody knows they're going to happen, and you just wait to see where it's going to happen. And in our case, it was one of our most -- one of our largest precincts in the city, where a whole lot of the candidates were right out front, that happened to be the precinct that didn't have its doors open on time. And we had, you know, between 7 a.m. and 7:05 a.m. we had multiple candidates tweeting to us saying, "What's the story? What's going on at this precinct?" Now, we were able to be right out there and to say as soon as we heard about it, you know, to publicly respond to the first candidate who had tweeted us on it to say, "We're on it, we're dispatching someone." We were able to make a phone call. What had actually happened was, simply, that the -- it was a precinct captain who couldn't find her checklist in the morning and was focused on maintaining order and didn't -- just kind of didn't remember that you're supposed to make sure the doors are open, even if you're not really ready to handle the voters. It wasn't a big problem, you know. But it was -- they were in the space, they had all their machines set up, but she was waiting for the next step in the procedures. So we were able to get in touch with her very quickly, she got the doors open. What could have been the story on the election wasn't, because we were on top of it so quickly. We went out -- we took care of that in the morning. We went out, we

191

visited, we talked to people. We really used the fact that people were talking about this. We were so responsive, immediately, to the candidates who were making noise about it, who were tweeting about it. We were able to explain exactly what the scope of the problem was, exactly what happened, exactly why it happened, exactly how many -- as best as we could how many voters had chosen to leave. And, at least, everybody kind of knew that the story had been told. They knew what it was. They could identify the problem. There was no mystery associated with it.

We also had -- we had one of those horrifying sort of moments where we learned that our poll books had been swapped between two precincts. And sure enough, we had voters voting using provisional ballots at both of these locations, first thing in the morning. Thankfully our poll workers knew what to do and they handled it in that way. We owned up to it, you know. We did have -- I did see a tweet from a voter who was complaining that they had been able to vote at one of these precincts, but we got out very quickly and we explained what had happened; that the poll books had been swapped that, you know. And then, we, actually I thought I had -- we had some sort of misinformation in our own shop where that game of telephone with your area representatives who are going out inspecting it, and then, talking to the dispatcher, and then, me getting the information. And I thought that both of the precincts had had their poll books by whatever the certain time was in the morning. I said that we had resolved the situation within 15 minutes, and then, I learned that we hadn't at one of the precincts; that actually it had taken longer to get the poll books over. Again,

scandalous, except that we were right on it.  We owned up to it.  I went out there and I said, "It turns out that precinct three got their poll books, first, in the swap this morning, precinct 11 got theirs later," you know.  So it was like, "Here's the information.  I'm telling you the reporters who are watching this -- before you even knew that it was a problem, I'm telling you "A," that it was a problem; and, "B" that we've already solved it."  And that just gave us so much credibility throughout the course of the day.

Then, we had this sort of fun experience that for the first time, and we had this new voting equipment since September, where, for the first time, we were putting tapes up on the walls at the polling places where you could actually see what the votes were that had been cast at the machine, rather than waiting to get the results from our office, which is what voters in our jurisdiction had always experienced before.  Well, the fact that that was available hadn't really caught on in September, and it had barely caught on in November.  By April, people were keen to it and this appetite for finding out the results as early as you possibly can was out there.  So, around the hour -- after the polls closed and poll workers started, you know, running their tapes and putting them up on the wall, we, not only had candidates going out there and tweeting what the results were at this precinct or that precinct, but we had poll workers going ahead and tweeting whatever the results were at their precinct.  Now, we had already started earlier in the day.  We had a few election workers who had -- who had asked, who had talked with us, who had, by permission, gone ahead and tweeted on a few things.  So, we kind of said that that was okay.

And I had actually sent out a tweet the night before the election reminding any of our poll workers who were on Twitter, because I knew we had, at least a few very engaged people, that it was okay for them to tweet during the course of the day on Election Day, but that they had to follow -- they had to keep in mind that their restrictions on partisan activity, on political activity, electioneering, all those kinds of things apply that they're representing our office and, you know, keep it to business, basically. And they did. And thankfully we're going to -- that's another thing that we're going to develop some more detailed policies and, you know, we're going to add that to our poll worker training. It wasn't really a component of our training this last time around, but it actually turned out to our advantage, again. It was a good adventure in transparency.

The other thing we did, and I mentioned this a little bit earlier, we started -- about early evening, late afternoon we started getting the snark about how the night was going to go. We started having people -- because we were, you know, we were slow in reporting our results in September, we were faster in November, but, you know, still not as fast as people wanted us to be. And we started getting the sort of snark about, "Boy, with turnout this low, you know, if the Board of Elections doesn't report the results faster, there's going to be hell to pay," you know, kind of stuff. So, we went ahead and just we spun it in exactly that way and we released our set of, "Here's how the night is going to go, and here's when you're going to expect results." Even the document on our website that we, you know, we called our "Guide to Election Night Reporting" started with that sentence, "That lower turnout does not

mean faster results." And we, you know, we packaged it in that way. And there's -- that's what we, "We hate to break it to you, but lower turnout does not mean faster reporting of election results" was just the way we -- we just culled it out, right there. The way that the dialogue was shaping up we wanted to answer it right in that space.

And we got good feedback. We got multiple tweets where people expressed that they felt we had done a good job of it. And so, I think that was a positive experience for our office. We found a lot of -- it paid a lot of dividends for us, operationally. I was able to be more on top of things. I was able, in many cases, to take the information I was getting on Twitter, and it would be the first time that our dispatchers would learn that there was a problem. And, you know, we got some good press. And that's always for a public information officer, hey, that's a good part of the goal, right?

So, I spent a lot of time talking about our experience, and Jeannie had asked me to go ahead and talk about one other topic. What I'm going to do is try to go through my slides on that, more quickly, but I think -- and I hope it's a bit of a launching point for how we're going to close out the day, today, in talking about social media policies, in general. And as I indicated, I don't have one yet. I have sort of a set of unwritten social media policies and some that need to -- that can be more readily written and some that really need a process of sort of engagement and talking through things to figure out how we need to handle some of those trickier questions about things like Facebook comments that we were talking about earlier in the day.

But I have an observation that I want to make about social media policies in the social media discussion. I feel that too often we talk about social media as though it's the universe of what we're talking about. And the social media policy creature is something that it seems to me an awful lot of people do for the same reason that they go into social media in the first place, which are the wrong reasons, just because they feel they're supposed to. We need to have -- we need to be on Twitter, we need to be on Facebook, we need to have a policy about how we're going to do this. And, yes, you do need to have a policy on these things. But I think that we really need to think about social media, and by this, I mean the cluster of not just this one thing that is social media, but Twitter and Facebook and YouTube and all of these different communications channels, as just a cluster of trees in this sort of broader forest of communications tools that we use. And we shouldn't think about Twitter and Facebook any differently than we think about a press conference or a conference call or a press release or any of the other tools that we use. The rules that apply in communicating with the public are the rules that should apply in communicating to the public by and large regardless of what tool you're using to get that communication out. And so, I don't think about -- I don't think that we should think of social media as being something that we win at or lose at, or that is the objective in and of itself to have a good social media site, and, you know, "Hey, we've won this." It's a tool that you use to accomplish any number of tasks, but those tasks are all supporting other objectives. And those objectives are training your poll workers effectively. Well, if YouTube is a tool that

196

you use to accomplish a task of getting video in front of your poll workers to make sure that they're well trained, great. But don't just do it to do it because you think it's cool and interesting. And I think that's the case across the board. If you need to get the word out on your deadlines for voter registration, don't just think about the witty way that you can get that word out through social media and, you know, do a viral video. Think about who you're trying to reach and what the best tools are to reach them. And you're going to want to do an old-fashioned press release, too, on some of these things. And make sure that you do those things and that you don't just think about social media as being the be-all/end-all of what you're doing. You need a communications plan that this is -- that social media is just a part of.

What strikes me about social media policies, as I review what others do, is that they're so -- in so many cases, not really breaking new territory. They're -- and it's -- they should go ahead and touch on issues of record retention and issues of how you do customer relations, on personal use of government resources for checking your own Facebook page, whatever, but you should already have a policy. And I'd be hard pressed to imagine an election jurisdiction that doesn't have some kind of a policy on personal use of their computers. And if you already have that, then that policy, you know, should apply to Facebook as well. You don't have to construct these things out of old cloth and you don't necessarily need a social media policy to prevent misuse of the resources. And so, I don't think that people should shy away from going into the social media space because, "Oh my goodness, you

know, what if somebody tweets, you know, pictures that they shouldn't be tweeting?"  Well, if somebody is tweeting pictures they shouldn't be tweeting on your official account, I hope they're already breaking some sort of a policy that you have on their use of government resources.

As I've gone through and tried to Google around and search on social media policies that I'm finding, these are the typical elements that I'm seeing.  There's the personal use of government resources policy.  And I applaud the ones that say keep it limited, not the ones that say absolutely not, because then, you just know all your employees are going to be violating it.

There is the workplace conduct element of it, you know.  You need to have somewhere that you're not supposed to be tweeting pictures of yourself.  And I think an important part of it that is especially true in the social media space, but has always been the case, is that anyone who is representing a government agency needs to be cognizant not only of what they're doing on the clock, but what they're saying about what even when they're off the clock.  And it's generally the case that you're going to find a policy somewhere that says if I'm at a cocktail party I'm not supposed to be trashing on any one of the candidates for office in our jurisdiction.  That's true whether I'm on social media or not.  But people feel it necessary to make it clear, and I think for good reasons, that that's true in social media.  I think that it is -- the risk of my offline political views becoming known and becoming an issue is so much greater if I'm active in the social media sphere than it ever was if all I was doing was talking to my friends and

family.  And so, that is something that is increasingly an issue that people are having to deal with.

There is a just general customer relations, you know, get back to people within 24 hours, sort of a policy.  Or maybe that's different.  Maybe you need to get back to people faster on social media than you need to get back to them if they send a letter, you know, and somewhere in between when they call you and you need to return a voicemail.  So, it's appropriate to have maybe a different threshold for how you handle some of these things with social media.

Monitoring and approval of official communication, this is sort of a thoughtful area of a number of these social media plans that I'm seeing that you can have -- recognize that there is a difference between personal accounts and business accounts, but if you've got a business account you need to make sure the boss knows about it, basically.  And I see this with like Secretaries of State will have these where they'll have their elections division, they'll have their business licensing division, they'll have all these different divisions where somebody might want to create an official page.  Well, just make sure the Secretary of State knows about it and that you've had -- and some sort of a process of signing off on that is something that is -- that I'm seeing a little bit of in some of these social media policies.  And in there is often some sort of a genuflexion to this really needs to be part of a communication strategy that you have.

Branding standards, I'm seeing a little bit of that.  It seems to be mostly policies that state that they're going to develop branding

standards, not so much ones that lay out a branding standard. But it looks like there are, you know, increasingly some places that are starting to think, well, we should probably make sure that the look and feel of our government agency -- of our government, you know, Twitter fields all look similar. And, you know, that's a precaution against sort of fake sites as well as just making sure that it looks professional.

Record retention I think is the big one and that's one that I know I want to grapple with. We had a whole conversation about FOIA earlier. The tendency for things to get deleted, well maybe it's perfectly fine for them to be deleted, you know. You tweet out something that's a typo, and then you retweet it a second time having fixed the typo, and you delete the first one. Is that really a problem to delete that or do all of these things need to be kept so that you've got a record? On Facebook, if somebody comments on your page and you delete it, you definitely need to keep a record of what you deleted and, you know, why you deleted it. But if they comment on it and then they delete it, what is your obligation to have taken some kind of a snapshot if something stayed up on your site for a period of time, but then the user them self was able to come in and delete it later? I don't know. I don't know what the answer to that question is. I don't know what the policy should be, but I think that there's an active discussion going on about those things, right now.

There's often sort of just a discussion of best practices guidelines that are a part of the social media policies that are out there. And I mentioned the -- sort of referenced the need for more

integrated -- for Twitter or Facebook, or whatever it is, being part of the communications plan for whatever that business goal is that you're trying to accomplish. The record retention issue is tied into the sort of comments policy. I think that this notion of having kind of a user agreement with the individual in the community who is interacting with your government agency site is not a bad thing, especially if you're going to be -- if there's any notion that you might be deleting things, which I think we need to do. If somebody puts profanity on a government website, I think we need to take it down. And I think we do need to have a policy that says so, that sort of warns them, up front.

The interesting kind of newer one, and I don't know of anybody other than Maryland that has done this, I don't know if anybody else, here, knows of this, but the State of Maryland went ahead and developed a social media policy to apply to candidates. And it's really a disclosure issue. What they wanted to do was to be able to sort of distinguish between the candidate sites and the non-candidate sites, because this communication is regulatable, or potentially regulatable. And I think that for people who are engaged in campaign finance and, you know, what the use of -- most people aren't spending a whole lot of money on their social media, but if you're paying somebody to run social media for you, then the message that you're getting out there is potentially something that can be covered by campaign finance statutes. And so, that's, I think, a real unchartered territory for the most part. I think that people are generally pretty happy with what the State of Maryland did, which was a pretty modest, just sort of, a labeling -- through a

labeling, kind of, a policy.  But I think that that's an area to watch, as well.

And I was going to close with three just sets of observations on sort of three key roles for those of you who are just thinking about getting involved in social media or just launching a foray into it.  And my three sets of proposals are, own your brand, and I'll talk about what I mean in a minute, think before you tweet, and be a good listener.  And I think if you just follow those three rules it will help you think about how to occupy the space.

Own your brand.  You have a brand, you have an acronym for your agency, you have a potential Facebook page, you have hashtags that people could be using, that people are probably already using, to talk about your agency.  Even if you're not on Twitter, there may be people who are using the acronym of your agency to trash talk you.  Check them out, own them, get into that space.  Make sure your information is out there, as well.  Make sure that you own the URLs that people might be using, whether it's in social media or just, you know, URLs in general, that people would be using to talk about you.  I mentioned a little bit earlier your brand, meaning you, personally, is a personal and professional brand.  And Chris talked about this earlier; that you are who you are, to the extent that you're a governmental official, and the extent that you're a private citizen.  And this is especially the case if you have a -- if you're occupying a lot of space in social media.  You can't get away, really, at the end of the day with imagining that what you say on social media, personally, and what you say on social media, professionally, are not going to blur, are not something that

other people are going to see what you're tweeting, especially if you're tweeting personal opinions. Probably, people saw the -- we had that example of a -- there was a guy who was running a Facebook feed for Secret Service who had tweeted a complaint about a news agency. He made sort of a critical comment about Fox News, thinking he was posting it to his private Twitter page when, in fact, he was posting it to the Secret Service's official Twitter account. So the Secret Service had this tweet that came out that was saying, "Oh my God, I can't believe I have to watch Fox News today." Well, the real problem is not that this guy accidentally posted it to the official Facebook -- the official Twitter page, although, of course that was a problem. The real problem is that he was posting it in the first place, because -- it is not that hard to find out that you work for the Secret Service and that you're posting these things. And that's potential scandal right there. Even if it doesn't break, today, it's just cruising for a problem, so just don't do those kinds of things. If you work for a government agency, know that you're always a reflection on your boss, you're always a reflection on your government, on your agency, whether you're representing yourself, or whether you're representing others.

Tweet what you know. And that's something that I've seen in some of the policies that talk about best practices, too. If you don't know what you're talking about, don't tweet it. You don't really need to tweet, right now, about that subject. If it's important for you to weigh in, make sure you go find out what the reality of the situation is before you say something that you need to back pedal on, or you later realize that you don't have as much expertise on

the topic as you think you did.  Know that your brand is permanent.

You can Google yourself, others can Goggle you and find tweets

that you put out there, you know, a year ago about your dog or

whatever it is.  But it also evolves over time, and so, you have

opportunities to recover from mistakes, to a degree, as well as the

opportunity to just sort of broaden your brand.

I do think that retweets are endorsements.  We discussed

that a little bit earlier.  I don't think that opinions expressed are ever

solely your own, they always reflect on your boss, they always

reflect on you as a public official.  And you're going to make

mistakes, accept them, but do your darnedest not to repeat them.

Think before you tweet, have a plan.  Just because you can engage

in the moment in a discussion on Twitter doesn't mean that you

have to.  Make sure that you vet content that needs to be vetted.

And ask yourself some of these questions.  Am I using the

right tool?  And I don't just mean this, in the moment, about saying

something stupid.  But, I mean, if I've got information that I need to

get out there, is sending a tweet really enough?  Maybe, I really

need to issue a press release on this, or maybe, I really need to go

about getting this information out in a different way and not get

myself trapped inside the channel that I'm just thinking about, at the

moment.  The same thing applies for people who just use press

releases for everything.  Maybe you need to think about some other

tools.

Does this further my goals?  Sometimes the tendency can

be, especially in getting into the back and forth on social media, to

just start heading down the path of a conversation that's something,

maybe, that you know about, but isn't really -- it's not the -- it's not what the topic should be about right now. It's not necessarily always -- just because you can say something and you know something about something and other people on Twitter or Facebook, or whatever, are talking about it doesn't mean that you need to spend your time and resources as a government agency having that conversation, right now. Sometimes you need to make sure that you've always got your eye on your goals for the day, for the week, for whatever it is that you need to be doing and that you're making sure that you're spending your time wisely and doing things that further your goals, as opposed to just being active and out there.

Make sure that what you're tweeting about is timely, is accurate, in interesting. Think about how things would read out of context. Maybe something could get retweeted and sent out there that was part of a conversation that made sense in context, but the pronouns could get confusing or it's sort of hard to tell what that really meant. So, just try to think about every tweet as something that could be retweeted. And tie it into the question of, does this further my goals? Am I ready for this conversation? For me, the last thing I really ever -- one of the last things I ever really want to be saying as a public information officer to somebody is, "I don't know, I'll get back to you." And I'll say that, I say that all the time. It's important to say. But before I call somebody back the first time I want to think through what that second follow-up question is and that third follow-up question. And that's true offline. It's true in a conversation with a reporter. I want to research it before the

deadline and get back to them.  The first time I'll say, "I don't know, I'll get back to you."  But then, I don't want to hang up the phone, go find out the answer, give them the answer and then, get a follow-up question that in turn I have to say, "I don't know, I'll get back to you."  So, before I engage in a conversation that's happening on Twitter, I make sure that I'm kind of ready to go there and I know what I'm talking about and I've kind of put it in context before I go out there and start talking about something.  I appreciate that one of the great things about social media is that you don't always drive the conversation, you don't always drive the narrative, but you have an opportunity to influence it.  But that also means that you shouldn't just always influence every conversation because you can.  And you should think about how you want to influence it and where you want those conversations to go before you spend your time and energy on it.

Be a good listener.  There are -- it's pretty easy to use lists and searches on Twitter to not allow yourself to get sucked into the time void, but you do need to keep up.  You do need to pay attention to what people are saying about you once you've occupied that space.  Engage, but don't dominate the conversation.  You don't have to always have the last word.  If somebody is being argumentative on Twitter, let them.  If you've gotten your information out, you're done.  You don't have to prove that they're wrong, which is what I mean by, know when to let go.  Know when it's just not time to engage on something anymore.  Do respond visibly.  I think it's -- for many people it's sort of an automatic reaction to just send direct messages to people and take things off

that public sphere for individual correspondents.  But I think if somebody says something to you, respond in a way that people approach you.  If somebody says something to you publicly, respond to them publicly.  Show that you've answered the question.  Show that you're being responsive to it.  Don't just take care of their answers offline in a private message, because then you don't get the benefit of the medium.  You don't get that opportunity to show that you're engaging.

And I think for anybody who does this, you really have three basic personality traits that you need to have, or you need to cultivate before you go there.  You need to have a thick skin.  You need to be ready to, basically, be in the middle of a 24/7 media availability that has a whole of people, other than the sort of more traditional news media types in the room.  You've got hecklers, and you've got to be ready and willing to deal with them and take them on and see benefit in taking them on in that forum if you're going to go there or you're just going to find it to be an exercise in frustration for you personally.

You've got to have a sense of humor.  You've got to be able to roll with the dialogue as it goes.  And I think that it is very helpful if you can go ahead and show that, but be wise about how you show it and don't get too casual.  You want to be casual, but not too casual, in the social media environment.

And you've got to have self-control.  You have got to always be careful, never let yourself get sucked into this idea that you're having a conversation that others aren't going to see, because everyone is always seeing what you're saying.  Everyone is always

seeing what you're tweeting. And everyone has the potential to see your direct messages or what you post on Facebook. And it is very important to know, not just how to edit yourself, but to self-censor, and to make sure that you are being the best steward of your own brand, and the best steward of your agency's reputation, as well.

And that's how I am going to close out.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you very much Alysoun. That's a great presentation and, really, in many ways a blueprint that I think many of the listeners and many of the election officials across the country will be interested in looking at.

I want to take some time now -- we're approaching the end of our roundtable discussion and it has been a full day. I know that I have -- I've got a long list of things to do as a result of this roundtable. There's things that I can't wait to get back and start exploring with my staff and the constituency that I serve in the State of Georgia.

But I want to make sure that each of the folks, here, at the table, get an opportunity to summarize their thoughts for the day. And it's helpful, I think, for the EAC to also get kind of a distillation of what is important, after almost now eight hours of talking about this, to see what we can boil down to the top priorities. And I've going to give Alysoun a chance to rest for a minute and I'm going to let her go last. But if I could, I'd like to start with Dana, work up to Brian, come around, and if you would share with the members of the roundtable and our audience what you think are the important takeaways that were discussed today.

208

MS. CHISNELL:

I think there are three or four basic things.  One is, I think the casual level of conversation that we see in social media, right now, is, it's going to change and adjust as different institutions take part in those channels and so, you know, sort of watch how that moves as you take part.

Next, although I hope that we've demystified a little bit about what social media is and how it can work for you in getting information out, and sort of representing out there in the world, I hope that we haven't scared you away completely.  So I want to encourage you to start small, you know.  Just do what we call "lurk."  Watch what's going on out there.  Kind of absorb, get some ideas and go as slow as you need to.  Don't feel like you need to rush into things.  But more than that, go where the people you want to engage are.  So, if it's young people you want to talk to, go find them.  They're probably on Facebook.  If it's older people, go find them.  They're probably on Twitter.  If it's some combination of expertise that you want, there's probably a place for that, too.  So, go look for those things.

And finally, don't do it until you know why you're doing it and how it fits into the conversation you want to have.  Imagine what you want that to be like with whoever it is, whether it's media or voters, what's that conversation?  How do you want it to go?  How do you want it to be perceived?  And then dive in.

That's what I think the big takeaways are.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you Dana.  Brian?

MR. NEWBY:

Well, I'm going to try and run through -- some of it's takeaways, other things are things that I wanted to say and we're wrapping up.

So, I do think that you hear a lot about having a social media strategy, and I talked earlier about the need to really have a communication strategy. But if you go even further than that, I think if you look at other industries and I think that's a big deal is looking at other industries, I don't think you can find -- you might find one example, but I don't think there are many examples of CEOs of companies who have been quoted saying, "We need a social media strategy." It's usually the IT group or the human resources group. I mean, if you think about it, the head of a company, I can't recall Steve Jobs saying that, or John Chambers of Sysco. I don't think you ever hear the chief executive officer saying, "We need a social media strategy." And so, what usually happens is it becomes a strategy about who can use Facebook when, some of the elements that were talked about. And I think if you have a communications strategy and you have a social media plan. And one organization that I think has a great social media plan is the Department of Navy. I mean, the Navy has a command plan and it is awesome. It's not about who can use it, but when you use it, et cetera. And I think as you develop that for yourself it's important to have resolve, because it's yours. And so, it's not the IT group at a county, it's not the human resources department. And they will have elements of influence and it's really -- in the end, it's your strategy, and your approach. And I think it's important that you have that. You learn from others, like I said, about other industries. There was a great

event last week that I wish I had been at, Personal Democracy forum. There's one every year, it's in New York. If I'm not at the next one, someone from our county should be. They talked about a lot of great ideas. Think about how you create, I guess, an ideas community within your strategy overall. Maybe it's a knowledge strategy, something like that. But I think, in the end, as you develop that, you're not a hero for developing it. So, I live in a community where they send out their citizen newsletter for the year and said, "Our number one accomplishment in 2010 is that we created a Facebook page and created a Twitter account." And I'm thinking, as a taxpayer I was hoping my streets would get paved, maybe my streetlights would work. I don't think that was a great accomplishment. So, you're not a hero for getting into that. But to Alysoun's point, there is something about people, are kind of insatiable about wanting it. There is a bit of a glorifying the ordinary and you'd be surprised how far the ordinary travels. But it's not free and I think that's one thing that you hear a lot about is that, "Well, this is free." It takes a lot of commitment to do it. So, you really don't want to start something that you can't maintain. And for that I think focusing on something, focusing on either a platform, focusing on an avenue or a communication method is the way to go, as opposed to try and have some carpet bomb effect where you don't hit anything very well.

And as I think about that, I stressed earlier I thought what we think is going to be big in 2012 we don't know yet really. I do think that Facebook is becoming the internet in a way that Starbucks' Facebook page gets 12 times the visitors Starbucks.com gets. And

211

so, while it's good to link people back from your Facebook page, I think there's value in you've got them on your Facebook page, as an example, keep them there. And I think you're going to see a lot more evolution of Facebook as a website platform. And so, that's probably the thing that we're monitoring the most, as well as we didn't really talk about applications. We're trying to develop an iPad application, focusing on that platform rather than all platforms.

I guess, two last thoughts about that, though, is, one more value in the Twitter is monitoring yourself. I think it's good to know the sentiment analysis of your organization, so having a Twitter ID lets us know what people are saying about the Johnson County election office. And so, just that very fact lets us be responsive.

And I think the last thing, though, is, all these tools we talked about, to me, set up a collision with, at least in voters' minds of something probably it's -- to me that's a whole another discussion beyond what we've always had as a election officials, but you have all of this stuff going on in this Internet space and a natural thought is, "Why can't we vote on the Internet?" And we're so far from that, and yet, in voters' minds, they don't see that we're that far. And so, I think we have this -- these two things coming together and somehow as election officials we're going to have to reconcile that, either figure out a way to make the Internet side work in a way that we can accelerate it through certification, or figure out, in our own minds, why all this stuff is okay, but voting is not okay and really get the pattern down as to why. And I think we kind of have a feel for why it is, but to me I think a user isn't going to -- is going to see that those things are naturally converging. And where we're like, "Oh

that's years away, maybe ever," but I don't think they understand that.  And so, we need to think through if that's really the right answer and then if it is how we communicate it.  And if it's not the right answer, challenge ourselves to figure that side out.

So, I like I said, those are all things that some of it was takeaways but other things I was just hoping to say, given this forum.  And I'm glad we had the forum, by the way.

MS. CHISNELL:

Yes, that was good.

DR. KING:

Excellent observation.  I think earlier today when Chris was talking about the use of the Internet to deliver applications to vote and then the use of the Internet to deliver the ballot to vote, there is a raised expectation on the part of the user out there about what the end point of this process is going to be.  But that is a topic for another roundtable.

So, I'll go to Chris.

MR. CHAMBLESS:

Well, first and foremost, I certainly appreciate the EAC to provide this forum, this roundtable.  It's been most enlightening.  I think it's clear that with HAVA and with the MOVE Act that is it no longer just a passing fad to move into this technology, but it's more now of a requirement for that.

However with that, I think it's like anything else.  It first requires you to develop a plan for that.  And that plan really needs to be realistic, you know.  In all plans, and having realistic expectations that, know that if you stumble, it is an investment.

You do need to stick with it. You do need to take it fruition to make sure that it was not just a misstep, but it's really worth doing.

I think social networking is really not the end. It's really only the beginning. If you view social networking as just another tool to augment all of the other tools, to provide and to achieve more exposure, it's -- in any marketing it's for you to reach that area or that sector that you're not reaching with the constant contact or with the e-mail or with the half page ad in the newspaper or the television commercial. It's just another opportunity, resource tool, another medium for you to reach that individual. And that's really what it's about. We are in a fast paced, hectic society. There is a reason why there's a Starbucks on each corner. There's a reason why there's drive-thrus at the dry cleaners. It's about doing more with less and making every bit of that time for you.

So again, I've very much enjoyed this discussion, learning from each of you, and what has worked, and what has not worked. And now, I'm excited to take this back and to improve, to test and to roll it out.

DR. KING:

Okay thank you, Chris. Alysoun?

MS. McLAUGHLIN:

I will add nothing new to the conversation by saying this, but I think that both Dana and Chris said some very key things that I want to repeat.

One is that social media is, and I'll sort of paraphrase I think something that Chris just said, that social media is what we do every day as communicators. We use it as a term to describe a

couple of software packages that have been developed that we use as tools. But that's all they are, is a certain set of software packages that happen to have a pretty broad reach and give us an opportunity to engage in a little bit of a different way, but at the end of the day what we're communicating and what we're communicating about haven't changed. And so, I think if we keep that in mind, and we explore the tools for what we are, learn -- spend some time, spend a limited amount of time exploring their functionalities and what they can do for us without investing too heavily in just one or another as the only way you get your word out, but always keeping in mind that some of these other tools are out there and some of them are older fashioned and work pretty well. So, as I think Dana was saying really early in the day, don't lose sight of your website. Don't lose sight of e-mail. Don't lose sight of some of these currently less sexy ways of getting the word out, but in many ways that have a very high impact.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you. I'll ask Jeannie, now, to give her summary and make some closing comments. And then, I'm going to reserve the privilege to close this roundtable.

MS. LAYSON:

Thank you, Merle. One of the reasons that the EAC wanted to have this roundtable is because we recognize that election officials are strapped, right now, in terms of resources; people, funds, and so forth. And federal agencies are as well. And at the federal level we have a great model of support for people who are

communicators, people who are IT managers, people who manage websites.  And it's called the Federal Web Managers Council.

And, as I mentioned earlier, I just established our Twitter account.  About a year ago, we completely redid our website, had a new launch, we're very proud of that.  We're a very small agency. We don't have that expertise in-house.  What we did was relied on this group of Federal Web Managers for their expertise.  And it's a community of knowledge that we have really relied upon.

And that's what we hope to emulate here.  We hope to, under our role as a clearinghouse of information about elections, establish that same kind of system for election officials when it comes to communicating in these mediums that we've been discussing today.  So, I hope that's what we have done.  And I hope that we can start posting some information, some plans, perhaps, that we will get from election officials.  I'll put our plan up there, because I do believe it's important to have a plan, if for no other reason, to be transparent.  We're talking about transparency. We're talking about using mediums that are all about being transparent.  You need to also let the public know your decision -- your thought -- how you made decisions about what comments you will post, what comments you won't post, who you will follow, what your retweeting policy is, so that you can demonstrate you're treating everyone the same way.  So, I do think it's important to have that structure in place.  So, we want to gather that information and make it available to election officials so that you don't have to start from scratch.

And the election officials who are here today are very brave and very creative, and I urge everyone watching to take a look at your websites, take a look at your Twitter accounts. You guys do a great job communicating, and we really appreciate your expertise today.

A couple of things that I heard today, over and over, that I think we should reiterate. You shouldn't do it just for the sake of having a Twitter account or a Facebook account. You really need to know why you're doing it, and who your audience is, and where they are. You can't control everything. It is the Wild West out there and it can get strange, it can get weird, and you have to be ready for that. Social media is not just about sharing information. It's about having a conversation. And if you're not prepared to do that, you're probably not going to be successful. Everyone is a content creator now, everyone is a journalist, which does present opportunities for election officials, because, as you all know, it's getting harder and harder to get the traditional media to report on basic facts about elections that voters need to know; polling place hours, and so forth. Use plain language, as Dana has emphasized so many times. And social media does not have to be used in a crisis. It should be used as you would just to distribute information about your office, processes in your office.

And so, I've learned a lot today, and we're going to gather the information that we've learned here today, and post it at eac.gov. So, thank you very much.

DR. KING:

Okay, thank you Jeannie. I'd like to use just a moment, then, to summarize my thoughts.

One of the things that I try to do when I moderate a roundtable is to take good notes.  And it's helpful for me, but it's also a way that I can capture what was said for the folks that aren't here with us right now who've had to leave earlier.  So, I'd like to share with you some of the things that I heard today and maybe ask you to reflect on their relevance, in terms of the context of election administration.

The first thing was that the digital divide is diminishing; that the new constituencies that have come into our market space, in the election field, they have specific expectations about the quantity, timing, and the convenience of communication.  That, as Jeannie pointed out, that two-thirds of Americans are now content creators with their own agenda and their own technology.

The growth of the Internet is a constant, but the way in which it grows, is constantly changing.  And a part of our job, as IT managers, is to be scanning the horizon, understanding those changes, anticipating those changes, and trying to ameliorate those changes as they affect our organizations.  The Internet is a portal into traditional media.  The distinction between old media and new media is intentionally blurred, and in many cases it's seamless.  That the users who utilize the Internet are often very user centric in their view; they see the Internet through their own lens and they have their own agenda for using it and their own preferred strategy.

In 2008, social media space was dominated by Democratic interest, in 2010, Republican interest.  An interesting seed change, and again, an indicator that there is a learning curve that is not nearly as steep, perhaps, as we used to think; that people are

adapting and adopting these technologies at a faster rate than they have in the past.  There is a political contagion in the use of social media; that people have a tendency to conform to their user group, and that rather than being reliant on traditional groups to help define expectations, define behavior, contemporary Internet users derive that from their friends, from their own groups that they create, rather than existing groups.  Older social media users, when they enter the sphere of social media, they often adopt the behaviors of the younger users.

That poll worker orientation can be delivered via YouTube, and it can become a tool for recruiting poll workers, but also vetting those; trying to winnow out those who have the skill and the attitudes to succeed.  Election administration concerns is, not only how do we adapt to this technology, but, how do we not get lost in the clutter of this technology; that we still have an important mission to serve, and that mission can't be diluted or distracted by the use of the media.  In 2010, the use of social media was adopted by early adopters, but the penetration, now, may be so complete that there's -- the issue of the innovation and managing the innovation is being replaced by managing the product, so that the penetration has already occurred in the market space.

A lot of Twitter activity may not translate into voter turnout. And I think we saw that, the two may be related, but there may not be a cause and effect.  Public trust, overall, in organizations/institutions is shifting downward, except for the military, and the reliance on friends to influence decisions is greater than it has been in the past.  People use multiple platforms.  No

social media user seems to dwell on a single technology, they move between technologies as needed. That social media is not necessarily bringing in new kinds of voters, just more of the same, in 2008, but -- I'm sorry, and in 2008, it was more diverse in terms of education and income. That some of the older technologies such as e-mail, websites, and particularly Google, was mentioned, need to be a part of the portfolio of the communication strategy that Brian talked about earlier. That the mini-news cycle may exist within social media, that is much, much shorter than the conventional news cycle.

Using a Twitter account to monitor what goes on in your space is a good starting point. Whether you become an active poster or not, it is a good strategy for moving, as I think Alysoun mentioned, kind of a soft launch strategy, moving slowly. And the feedback that is acquired by that process of monitoring the account is not only a necessary thing for election officials, it's actually an obligation for election officials; that we need to collect feedback on the performance of our office and the performance of the technologies that we use to support elections. Using social media to follow other government agencies may be a very intuitive way to get started in the use of social media. There may be other organizations within your jurisdiction that are active and that may be a great starting point.

When you are putting together your social media strategy be aware of the selection of a voice, a way, a tone, an attitude that articulates, not only the content of your organization, but also portrays the values of your organization. And that voice may need

to change under circumstances.  It may shift from conversational to authoritative, but be aware that it should be a conscious decision.

Ethical conduct should be second nature to election officials and that ethical conduct should reach into the use of all communication, including social media.

Setting up your social media tools is a complex and difficult task, and there should be some planning that precedes the setting of security levels and privacy levels.

You can use Twitter as a wire service, as it was mentioned by Chuck.  Authenticated tweets can be very valuable in demystifying some of the rumors and some of the poorly understood things that surround elections.

Be capable and ready to discuss and share issues in a clear and succinct manner using social media.  We used to talk about the need for the elevator speech, you know, that short speech that you need to have in your vest pocket.  And now, we know it's length.  It needs to be 140 characters.  So that's…

MS. LAYSON:

130.

MR. NEWBY:

130.

DR. KING:

130, so you can retweet it.

MS. CHISNELL:

So, it could be retweeted.

DR. KING:

Transparency has to be more than just intent, it has to be actionable. And so, simply to declare that you intend to be transparent, but not follow through on that, the hypocrisy of that will be quickly picked up on by the users of social media. In the absence of a requirement for secrecy or obfuscation of information, the default should be transparency. Unless it is prohibited from disclosure, then, perhaps the default should be to share that information with the constituency. Transparency is a goal and a process. It's something that may be preceded by an attitude that will lead us towards the proper use of social media.

Personnel development may be an important part of the strategy in developing a social media approach within your organization; that it may not always be you who is responsible for it, for its execution, but ultimately you're responsible for the effect that it produces.

We should do our best to anticipate the media's needs prior to the elections. We know what the hot issues are in our jurisdiction. Let's go ahead and get that information organized, make it available to the media prior to the election.

We should be honest with our colleagues in the media. We should lead with our innovations. We should look beyond the election offices to find assistance in developing the first best effort in developing our social media strategy.

And, as I kind of wound down to summarizing really your summaries, the two things that I heard that I will focus on as I look at its appropriate application in my shop, is that the use of social media should be purposeful. It should not be an end in itself, and it

is a medium, but it is not the message, and the message is still our responsibility. And then, finally, it's better to succeed in the small than to fail in the large. And so, start small and be successful.

With that, I would like to thank -- I'm sorry, Jeannie has reminded me that there's one more important piece that she needs to share.

MS. LAYSON:

I forgot to mention this earlier. When I was talking earlier about exchanging information ideas among election officials, we actually have a new tool available on the website. It's an initiative led by Commissioner Davidson. It's called "The Election Official Exchange Tool." And, if you go to our website, you can find it under the "election management resources" tab, but we'll also highlight it on the blog. But basically, it's a tool for new election officials to find more seasoned election officials who have expertise in certain areas. We also want election officials who would like to share their expertise to sign up. And perhaps, I can't promise this, because the tool has already been developed, but perhaps, we can add social media down the road as one of the areas of expertise.

So, I just wanted to tell everyone that that was available. And like I said, that was an initiative of Commissioner Davidson, and Sarah Littman in my office worked on that. So...

MS. CHISNELL:

So, how do local election officials find out about that?

MS. LAYSON:

I will tweet about it, as well, yes.

DR. KING:

Thank you, Jeannie.

MS. LAYSON:

Yes.

DR. KING:

In closing then, to each of the members of the roundtable, thank you so much for coming today. Thank you for your preparation and thank you for your participation, extremely valuable. On behalf of all your colleagues out there, thank you for your time.

To the EAC, thank you for hosting this roundtable discussion. Particularly, thank you to Emily Jones for her work on the logistics. It could not happen without her. And to the many people that are running the audio visual and the webcast portion, thank you so much for an excellent job.

With that, I will close this roundtable and declare it at an end. Thank you so much.

MS. LAYSON:

Thank you.

***

[The EAC Roundtable Voting Goes Viral: Using New Media to Manage an Election and Communicate with Voters adjourned at 4:46 p.m.]

bw/add