



OFFICE OF THE  
**STATE AUDITOR**

**Auditor Alert 2020-03**

**Date:** August 11, 2020

**Subject:** Use of Social Media Accounts by Government Officials and Government Entities

**Overview**

In general, public funds should not be used to pay to maintain or promote political or personal social media accounts. Government websites should not be used to support, promote, or drive followers to those social media accounts.

**Guidance**

Utah Code 20A-11-1203(1) states:

Unless specifically required by law, and except as provided in Section 20A-11-1206, a public entity may not:

- (a) make an expenditure from public funds for political purposes, to influence a ballot proposition, or to influence a proposed initiative or proposed referendum; or
- (b) publish on the public entity's website an argument for or against a ballot proposition, a proposed initiative, or a proposed referendum.

Utah Code 20A-11-1206 allows public entities to provide balanced arguments and factual information to the public about a ballot proposition.

As such, the Office of the State Auditor reminds governmental entities and governmental officials to:

- Avoid linking campaign-related social media accounts on governmental websites
- Avoid using government social media accounts for political purposes, except as allowed by Utah Code
- Avoid making government expenditures of public funds on social media activities which may be reasonably perceived as political campaign-related support

We recognize the complexities of managing multiple social media accounts but recommend government officials and governmental entities strive to clearly delineate between social media accounts used for appropriate official government communications versus those that cross into political activities for which the expenditure of public funds may be improper.