

ORDINANCE NO. 141-2025(AS), *First
Reading*

By Councilmember Cobb

An Ordinance amending Chapter 105, "Public Records" to add Section 105.05 to prohibit the use of city social media accounts and email systems for political messaging and limiting their use to official informational purposes; and declaring the necessity that this legislation become immediately effective as an emergency measure.

WHEREAS, the City of Cleveland Heights maintains official communication platforms, including but not limited to social media accounts and email systems, for the purpose of disseminating information to the public in a fair, neutral, and transparent manner; and

WHEREAS, the City of Cleveland Heights seeks to ensure that its communication platforms are used solely for nonpartisan, official informational purposes and are not misused for political advocacy, electioneering, or the endorsement or opposition of any candidate, ballot measure, or political party; and

WHEREAS, City of Cleveland Heights communication platforms are funded by public resources and must therefore be used solely to serve the interests of the community in a fair and unbiased manner; and

WHEREAS, the inappropriate use of City of Cleveland Heights communication platforms for personal, political messaging or partisan purposes can undermine public trust and violate ethical standards; and

WHEREAS, the City of Cleveland Heights seeks to establish clear guidelines to prevent the use of public communication resources for electioneering, political advocacy, or personal political gain; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to ensure that all City communications remain focused on providing accurate information about municipal services, policies, and public safety, without advancing any personal or political agenda; and

WHEREAS, this Ordinance is intended to align with applicable federal, state, and local laws governing the appropriate use of public resources and government communications;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, that:

SECTION 1. The purpose of this ordinance is to protect the integrity of public communication systems by restricting their use to official, informational purposes and prohibiting political messaging that may suggest partisanship or political favoritism.

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SECTION 2. Chapter 105 of the Codified Ordinances of Cleveland Heights is hereby amended to add Section 105.05 "Use of City Social Media Accounts and Email Systems" as set forth in Exhibit 1 attached hereto and incorporated herein.

SECTION 3. It is found and determined that all formal actions of the Council relating to the adoption of this Ordinance were taken in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements.

SECTION 4. Notice of the passage of this Ordinance shall be given by publishing the title and abstract of its contents, prepared by the Director of Law, once in one newspaper of general circulation in the City of Cleveland Heights or by posting the full text of this Resolution to the City of Cleveland Heights website.

SECTION 5. It is necessary that this Ordinance become immediately effective as an emergency measure for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety of the inhabitants of the City of Cleveland Heights, such emergency being the need to end social media communications that are potentially inflammatory and divisive from threatening the public peace and safety of residents and elected officials. Wherefore, provided it receives the affirmative vote of five (5) or more of the members elected or appointed to this Council, this Ordinance shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its passage; otherwise, it shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest time allowed by law.



TONY CUDA
President of Council



ADDIE BALESTER
Clerk of Council

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PASSED: July 7, 2025

Presented to Mayor: 07/08/2025 Effective Date: 07/18/2025

KAHLIL SEREN
Mayor

*Effective date per Article IV, Section 5 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Cleveland Heights

EXHIBIT 1

105.05 USE OF CITY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS AND EMAIL SYSTEMS

(a) DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this ordinance:

1. **"City Communication Platforms"** means any official social media account, email address, website, or electronic communication system operated or managed by the City of Cleveland Heights.
2. **"Political Messaging"** means any communication that expressly or implicitly supports or opposes a candidate for public office, a political party, or a ballot measure, or that constitutes electioneering or political advocacy.
3. **"Informational Purposes"** means communications that provide factual information about City services, operations, policies, events, and initiatives, including legally mandated notices and neutral explanations of ballot measures.
4. **"Opinion"** means any statement, comment, or communication expressing a subjective belief, value judgment, endorsement, criticism, or position on a matter of public, political, or social debate.

(b) PROHIBITED USES

No City employee, elected official, or their representative shall use City Communication Platforms to:

1. Express criticism, support for, or opposition to any person holding public office;
2. Advocate for or against any political party;
3. Advocate for or against any ballot measure, unless providing a neutral, legally permitted explanation pursuant to state law;
4. Engage in or promote political fundraising, campaigning, or partisan activity.
5. Express a personal opinion or viewpoint.

(c) PERMITTED USES

City Communication Platforms may be used only to:

1. Disseminate factual, neutral information regarding City programs, services, and operations;
2. Announce City-sponsored events or public meetings;
3. Provide emergency notifications and public safety information;
4. Issue legally required notices, including impartial explanations of ballot measures consistent with state and local laws.

(d) ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

1. Violations of this ordinance may result in disciplinary action for City employees in accordance with the City's personnel policies and procedures.
2. Elected officials found to have violated this ordinance may be subject to public censure or other actions as permitted by law.