



## Contacting Elected Officials

(Time varies)

### OBJECTIVE(S)

Students learn the process and participate in contacting elected officials through the social networking web sites Facebook and Twitter.

### MATERIALS

Computer/Internet Access	Contacting Elected Officials handout
Contacting Elected Officials worksheet	

### GET READY

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

### INSTRUCTIONS

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

official from the list that they would like to contact. Students can choose officials at either the national level or state level. Remind the students that they are more likely to get responses from local or state officials.

- ✓ Once students have chosen officials to contact, have them fill out the Contacting Elected Officials worksheet.
- ✓ Once the worksheet has been checked over, have students search for their elected official on Facebook and/or Twitter.
- ✓ Students may then contact their chosen official using the method described on the handout.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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



## Contacting Elected Officials (continued)

# Contacting Elected Officials

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

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

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

Note: A source for the websites of all members of Congress is

[http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW by State.shtml](http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW%20by%20State.shtml)

Two sources for websites for Ohio government officials are

<http://www.ohio.gov/government/> or <http://www.govspot.com/state/oh.htm>



## Contacting Elected Officials (continued)

# Contacting Elected Officials

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile of Lynn Jenkins. The top navigation bar includes 'facebook', 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', 'Inbox 3', and user options 'Angel Romero', 'Settings', and 'Logout'. The profile picture is a portrait of Lynn Jenkins in front of an American flag. The cover photo is a blue banner with the text: 'Lynn Jenkins REMINDER: The State of the Union will be tonight at 8PM CST Use #SOTU on T with the #GOP response, on Wednesday.' Below the cover photo are tabs for 'Wall', 'Info', 'Twitter', 'YouTube', 'Join Lynn', and 'Notes'. A text box for writing a post is visible with a 'Share' button. The 'Just Fans' section shows several posts:

- Lynn Jenkins** I will be attending the Home Depot distribution center board-cutting ceremony tomorrow in Topeka. [Home Depot grand opening set | CJOonline.com](#)  
Rather than having a ribbon-cutting ceremony, The Home Depot will hold a board-cutting ceremony Friday as it celebrates the grand opening of its Topeka distribution center.  
10 hours ago · Comment · Like · View Feedback (3) · Share
- Lynn Jenkins** My response to President Obama's State of the Union Address  
[Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins - State of the Union Response](#)  
[www.youtube.com](#)  
Yesterday at 10:56pm · Comment · Like · View Feedback (20) · Share
- Lynn Jenkins** REMINDER: The State of the Union will be tonight at 8PM CST Use #SOTU on Twitter to stay up to date with the #GOP response.  
Yesterday at 8:25am · Comment · Like · View Feedback (5)
- Lynn Jenkins** A great resource to follow our nation's debt.  
[National Debt Tweets \(NationalDebt\) on Twitter](#)  
[www.twitter.com](#)

The left sidebar contains the following information:

- Add to My Page's Favorites
- Suggest to Friends
- Subscribe via SMS
- Information**
- Country: United States
- Current Office**
- Office: Congresswoman
- State: Kansas
- District: 2



## Contacting Elected Officials (continued)

### Contacting Elected Officials

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

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



## Contacting Elected Officials (continued)

# Contacting Elected Officials

twitter Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

 **whitehouse**

[Follow](#)

**Deadline is 11:59PM EST tonight to nominate an outstanding citizen for an extraordinary honor**  
<http://bit.ly/4O8N6h>  
 about 5 hours ago from web

Hit him with your best shot: submit your questions for Obama, vote on others via YT. He answers Monday <http://bit.ly/QaZPN>  
 about 10 hours ago from web

Last Chance! Nominate a local hero for the Presidential Citizens Medal <http://bit.ly/4O8N6h>  
 about 12 hours ago from web

#StateOfTheUnion: Full video, transcript, photo gallery, policy run-down from Mona Sutphen <http://bit.ly/9m5Y8M>  
 about 20 hours ago from web

The State of the Union & the State of Health Reform: "Let's Get It

**Verified Account**

**Name** The White House  
**Location** Washington, DC USA  
**Web** <http://www.whiteh...>  
**Bio** Official WH twitter account. Comments & messages received through official WH pages are subject to the PRA and may be archived. Learn more <http://wh.gov/privacy>

87 following 1,694,572 followers 13,953 listed

**Tweets** 203

**Favorites**

**Lists**  
 @whitehouse/usg  
 View all

**Actions**  
 block whitehouse  
 report for spam

**Following**





## Contacting Elected Officials (continued)

### Contacting Elected Officials Worksheet

Three elected officials I am interested in contacting are:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in talking about these two topics (These can be anything of interest to you, including what goes on at school, what you see on television, or what affects your family):

Topic 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Topic 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Now, choose one of your topics and pick the elected official you think best to respond to that topic. Practice writing what you would like to say, including any comments or questions you have:

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