



## **United States Postal Inspection Service**

### **Terms and Conditions for Users of USPIS Social**

Media Sites Revised June 2023

## **PURPOSE**

Because many of our citizens and other stakeholders utilize social media for news and communications, the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) has developed its own social media accounts, which help us inform the public about our agency's work and mission. Comments left on our social media sites reflect the views of the commenters and not the views of this agency.

USPIS is committed to fully complying with the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and other similar legal obligations surrounding free speech. Since we follow the law, there may be times when what some people perceive to be offensive comments left by members of the public will remain visible on our social media posts, if such comments are legally protected speech.

USPIS has an important interest in assuring the accuracy and consistency of information associated with our social media sites. These terms and conditions establish guidelines for the public's use of our social media sites in a way that balances these values.

## **DEFINITIONS**

1. "Social media" means digital content created by USPIS and communicated on platforms that allow sharing, commenting, and engagement by the public. Examples of the social media accounts we may use are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
2. "Comments" include any digital content, information, links, images, videos, or any other form of communicative content posted in reply or response to a social media account post posted by USPIS on one of our social media sites.
3. "User" means a member of the public who views or interacts with one of our social media accounts.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

1. The leaders of USPIS believe that honest, civil, and productive discussions provide the best environment for citizens and other stakeholders to understand the work of law enforcement.
2. We ask users to consider that our social media feeds may be viewed by children and other impressionable people. Therefore, we strongly encourage users to avoid the use of profanity, slurs, personal attacks, bullying, or false information in comments made on USPIS social media accounts.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

USPIS commits to regularly train its employees on this policy and relevant freedom of speech caselaw. USPIS also commits to hold employees accountable if they violate policy or law.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

1. These terms and conditions apply to all USPIS social media accounts. Where possible, a link to these terms and conditions may be provided, and they will be made publicly available on the USPIS.gov website.
2. Users should know that social media posts we make, comments and replies to those posts, and any direct or private messages sent to us may be public records subject to applicable public records release.
3. Our social media accounts are not monitored 24/7, and no one should utilize our social media accounts to seek emergency services or emergency help. Anyone in need of emergency services or emergency help should call 9-1-1.
4. We do not guarantee we will respond to comments made on or messages sent to our social media accounts.

## **CONTENT MODERATION**

1. **Limited Public Forum.** Our social media accounts are created and maintained as limited public forums under the caselaw pertaining to the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We invite members of the public to view and, where possible and permitted, provide comments or other engagements on our social media posts. However, the law permits us to hide and/or delete comments that are not

protected speech under the First Amendment and relevant caselaw. We are also permitted to prevent comments where possible or hide the totality of comments on a post prior to it being posted. As a general rule, we will not hide and/or delete comments solely because such comments are critical of USPIS or its officials.

2. **Prohibited Content.** As indicated above, we may hide or delete:

- a. Comments expressly advocating direct violence or other illegal activity;
- b. Comments containing or linking to obscenity, which is defined as sexually explicit and/or pornographic content that is patently offensive, appeals to prurient interest, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value;
- c. Comments that expressly encourage or advocate our agency to illegally discriminate based on race, age, religion, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other legally protected class;
- d. Comments containing links to malware and/or malicious content that affects the normal functioning of a computer system, server, or browser;
- e. Duplicate comments posted repeatedly within a short period of time;
- f. Comments containing actual defamation against a specifically named person or organization, either as determined by a court or comments that are patently defamatory by easily discovered facts;
- g. Comments that contain images or other content that violate the intellectual property or copyright rights of someone else, if the owner of that property notifies us that the property was posted in a comment on our social media account;
- h. Comments that contain a hyperlink to any website other than those controlled by USPIS. This will be done without regard to the viewpoint of the comment containing such a link or the content of the site to which the link redirects.

3. **Retention.** When a comment containing any of the above content is posted to our social media account, a copy or electronic record of that content may be retained or archived pursuant to our records retention policy, along with a brief description of the reason the specific content was deleted. Once

documented, the content will be removed, where possible, from our social media account.

## **APPEAL**

1. If our staff hides or deletes a user's comment pursuant to these terms and conditions, except in cases where this is done to all comments on a post, the user has the right to appeal that decision by sending an email or letter to USPIS within five business days.
2. Upon receipt of an appeal, our Office of Counsel will determine whether the comment at issue contained content protected by law. If the appeal is successful, the comment may (if possible) be restored for public view, or the user may be permitted to repost the comment. Upon a determination that the comment was not protected by law, the user will be notified that the appeal was denied.
3. **Blocking or Banning a User.** When we determine that a user has violated these terms and conditions on three or more occasions within a twelve-month rolling period, we may block or ban the offending user from the social media account where the violations occurred, after the Office of Counsel has reviewed the alleged violations.

If we block or ban a user, we will (a) reasonably attempt to notify the user; (b) describe the violation(s); and (c) explain the appeal process.

If the appeal is successful and the user has not violated this policy three times within a rolling 12-month period, we will unblock or unban the user from the social media account. If the appeal is not successful, our decision will stand.

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