

## Public Relations & Crisis Management Preparations for 2012 General Election

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### Social media – Facebook and Twitter and YouTube

- Facebook is a definite
- YouTube – Important platform to have at the ready for any response, emergency information effort, demonstration video
- Twitter – pros and cons: need to be able to keep up with subscribers' posts, may be difficult to generate "followers" to election agency

### Put together news releases and schedule

- August
  - Public Service Announcements
  - Three months of columns/letters to the editor
    - August – What your election office is doing to get ready for the election/new IVRS
    - September – Registration information
    - October – Voting options – Early, Absentee & Election Day
      - Can use as opportunity to advise voters to return absentee apps directly to your office and not a third party
      - Can use as opportunity to advise voters to get absentee apps to your office well ahead of deadline, given the tight schedule for Thursday mailing and the voter's need to return voted ballot with postmark of Monday or earlier
  - Organize legal notices
- Early September
  - Special Bulletin or Outreach about College Students
  - How to Check Your Registration Status
- Late September
  - Military/Overseas Voters
  - Registration Deadline – October 9
  - How to Register
  - How to Check Your Registration Status
- Early October
  - Any pre-election mailing
  - Reminder on Registration Deadline
  - Grace Period starting October 10
  - Early Voting
  - Absentee voting do's and don'ts

### Fast Fact Cards

- Provide thumb-nail sketch of all the important dates: Registration Deadline, Grace Period, Early Voting, Absentee Voting
- Chicago has a standard format that we can share and that you may modify with your own logo and text

### Conflicts – Listening & Responding

- Ballot-Security Activists
- False Reports
  - How and when to engage – Quick, Polite, Firmly and Publicly
  - Don't participate in message boards
- Be ready to utilize last-minute human interest (e.g.: Chicago's surge in Early Voting in 2008 and last-minute influx of foreign media observers in 2008).

### Crisis Management

- Have team identified well in advance of a crisis
- Drop all other tasks/delegate routine business so that team stays focused on addressing crisis
- Avoid 'no comment'
- Move rapidly. With social media, it's important to remember that you will not be the only source of information, and it's important to keep ahead of the information curve and present cogent updates quickly. Speculation and rumors tend to fill any information vacuum
- If you have your social media options established in advance (particularly facebook and youtube), that's all the better to use that as a way of updating followers and others interested quickly
- Do not let any staff get drawn into comment boards

Table 1: Crisis Preparation Best Practices

1. Have a crisis management plan and update it at least annually.
2. Have a designated crisis management team that is properly trained.
3. Conduct an exercise at least annually to test the crisis management plan and team.
4. Pre-draft select crisis management messages including content for dark web sites and templates for crisis statements. Have the legal department review and pre-approve these messages.

### Additional Resources

Save this link to public relations/crisis management materials

[http://www.instituteforpr.org/essential\\_knowledge/detail/crisis\\_management\\_and\\_communications/](http://www.instituteforpr.org/essential_knowledge/detail/crisis_management_and_communications/)

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