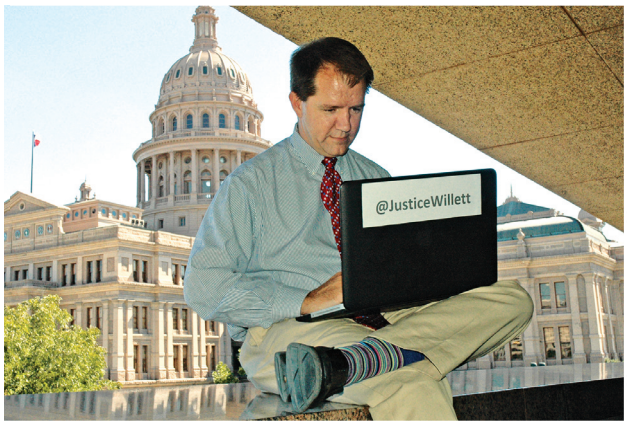
Tweeting #Justice

How a campaign strategy transformed into a can't-miss online presence.

WHETHER HE'S QUOTING HISTORICAL FIGURES, COMMENTING ON CURRENT EVENTS, OR CRACKING JOKES, TEXAS SUPREME COURT JUSTICE DON WILLETT has quite the following on Twitter. By balancing work and personal life, Willett's digital connection with the public sets a precedent for other officials. Keeping a 140-character limit in mind, he answers questions about his social media successes.



PHOTOGRAPH BY HANNAH KIDDOO

Texas Supreme Court Justice Don Willett crafts clever tweets.

Why did you join Twitter?

Mainly as a campaign comm tool. People consume info online, esp political info. It's political malpractice not to engage via social media.

You've tweeted more than 6,400 times. Were those all directly from you, or do you have a helper?

For better or worse, it's 100% me, which I think people find refreshing & authentic. (It's tough to believe I've tweeted that much, though.)

What comments do people have about your use of Twitter?

Many folks (mis)describe me as the most interesting public official on Twitter—a bar so low it's subterranean. I keep it light & positive.

Name three people everyone on Twitter should follow.

Besides me? Ace historian Michael Beschloss (@BeschlossDC). The genius observations of @Honest Toddler. And for sports junkies, @TheFakeESPN.

How can an attorney benefit from Twitter?

Follow incisive folks across a range of views & areas—just to learn & laugh. As for boosting biz, info can ricochet fruitfully online.

You're active on Facebook. Which platform do you prefer?

I enjoy both, but the quantity & content differs. FB = more personal & family-focused. Twitter = more current events & newsy, & more often.

What rules do you have for your account?

I don't discuss issues that could appear before me or throw partisan sharp elbows. I strive to keep things witty, informative & interesting.

Have you ever had to deal with trolls?

I've only blocked 1 person, who committed the cardinal sin of saying rude things about my sainted mother. Nobody disses heroic Mama Doris!

How many tweets a day is too many?

I don't follow folks who tweet w/ every breath. The volume is paralyzing. I tweet maybe 10-20x/day. It varies & depends on what's happening.

To read the full Twitter-view, go to texasbar.com/willett.

TEXAS PEOPLE

Jaime Esparza
District Attorney, El Paso

Received the Paul H. Chapman Award by the Foundation for Improvement of Justice for creating the 24-Hour Contact program to support victims of domestic violence.

Gibson Gayle
Norton Rose Fulbright, Houston

Received the Order of Merit from the Republic of Germany in honor of his work with the M.D. Anderson Foundation at the University of Texas.

Dan Worthington
Atlas, Hall & Rodriguez, McAllen

Appointed to the external advisory board of the University of Texas-Pan American College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Victoria Garcia
Bracewell & Giuliani, L.L.P., San Antonio

Received the Norma Martinez Lozano Leadership Award from the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for her leadership in international trade and economic development.