

## How to use Twitter for your YDA Chapter

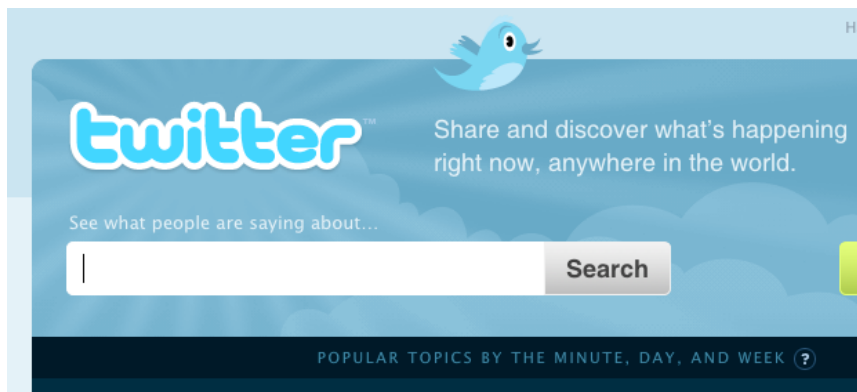
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Never used Twitter? Have a personal Twitter account and wondering how to use it for your chapter? Already have an account for your chapter but having trouble building a following? No matter what your level of Twitter expertise, Manhattan Young Democrats is here to help. Thousands of YDA members are on Twitter, a powerful tool that we can use to amplify our voice if we collaborate, converse and share our message.

### Twitter 101: Basics

#### *What is it?*

Twitter is a social media tool used for micro-blogging. Each message is at most 140 characters and is prompted by the question "What are you doing right now?" If you are familiar with Facebook, the messages are similar to status updates, with the major exception that anyone can view your posts on the web, not just logged-in members or "friends."



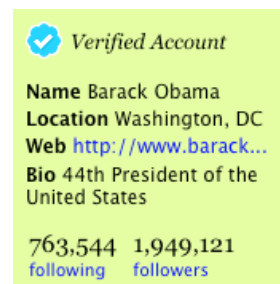
#### *Why should you use it?*

Thousands of organizations, individuals, politicians, journalists, and even movie stars are using Twitter. If you follow best practices, you can reach new audiences, converse with press and interact with your members. You can even help progressive organizations raise money, promote your favorite candidates and help protect youth in foreign nations like Iran.

#### *Who else uses it?*

- Many YDA Chapters and leaders are also on Twitter. See the end of this document for a list.
- Non-profit and advocacy organizations like ACLU, Planned Parenthood and Courage Campaign
- Celebrities, politicians and journalists

If you follow someone well known, be sure to look for the "Verified Account" seal, seen here.



*Who is your audience?*

There are millions of users on Twitter (Twitter does not publish usage statistics), with the service growing exponentially each day.

Now that you know what kinds of people are using Twitter, you must think about who are your *target* audience will be on Twitter. Do you want to build relationships and notoriety with other YDA chapters across the country? Attract new members in your region? Communicate with leading experts on local political issues like the marriage equality, election reform or health care? Before beginning to use Twitter (or improving your existence Twitter presence), take a minute to think about what you want to get out of the tool. You can't have everything, but you can excel in specific areas.

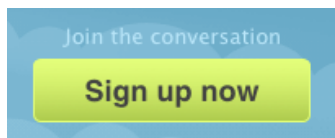
*How are they tapped in to Twitter?*

Many people simply use Twitter through the web interface at [twitter.com](http://twitter.com). You can also receive Twitter updates to your mobile phone, third party applications and other websites. What kind of content you post should vary depending on where you think your followers are likely to read these messages. Tweets containing web links are useless to those who receive updates via text on a mobile phone without web browsing capability.

## **Twitter 101: Getting Started**

*How do I set up an account?*

Go to <http://twitter.com> and click on "Sign up."



*What kind of username should I choose?*

Your username should be easy to remember, clearly identify who you are and when possible, less than ten characters. For example, "gomyd" is a better username than "manhattanyoungdems" or "manhattanyd." To check username availability, go to <http://twitter.com/usernameyouwantgoeshere>. You can change your username at a later date, but we highly discourage this practice, as other Twitter users will not recognize who you are.

*What should I put as my avatar (profile picture)?*

If possible, your avatar should just be your chapter's logo. Use the largest size picture allowed (file size 700k, JPG, GIF or PNG format). When viewing other user's profiles, you can click on a picture to view it larger.

*What should be on my Twitter background?*

Changing your Twitter background is not essential, since most users will view your tweets on a third-party website or application. If you choose to do so, check out this

site for a list of resources and tutorials:

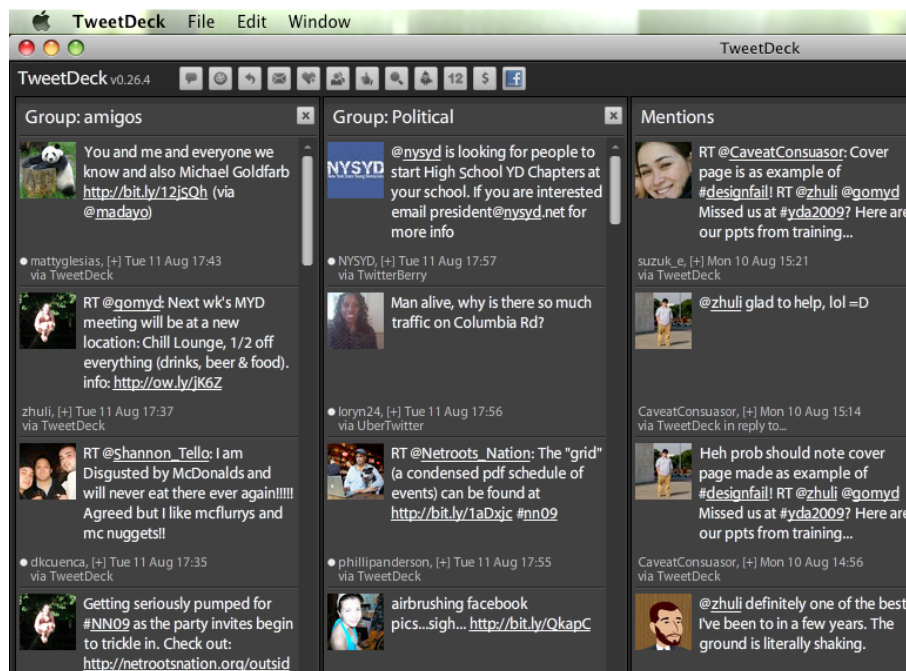
<http://www.interactiveinsightsgroup.com/blog1/how-to-create-a-unique-twitter-background/>

*Should I set my profile to public or private/locked?*

Your profile should always be public. The only reason to have a private profile on Twitter is for your personal account. The private account will deter people from "following" you.

*Where should I be viewing Twitter and making updates?*

You can use <http://twitter.com> to update, but there are many third party applications, both web-based and downloadable, that have many additional features. If using a Mac, many users prefer TweetDeck and Tweetie. On Windows, popular options are TweetDeck and Seismic. For iPhone, try TwitterFon. For Blackberry, both TwitterBerry and UberTwit are available. For Windows Mobile, try TinyTwitter or Twobile. These tools are great if only one individual is updating the account.




*A view of TweetDeck's customizable columns (on @zhuli's account)*

To tweet effectively for your chapter, you will likely want to have multiple members on your social media team. In this case, we strongly recommend the FREE web-based tool known as hootsuite, available at <http://hootsuite.com>. HootSuite allows you to have multiple administrators and editors, track the number of clicks on your links and create custom columns of feeds. Hootsuite has an option to "Send Later." If you are busy during the day you can set up multiple "pending" tweets in the morning to be sent later on throughout the day.


Type your Tweet here! 119 left

Select Profile(s) [All](#) | [None](#)



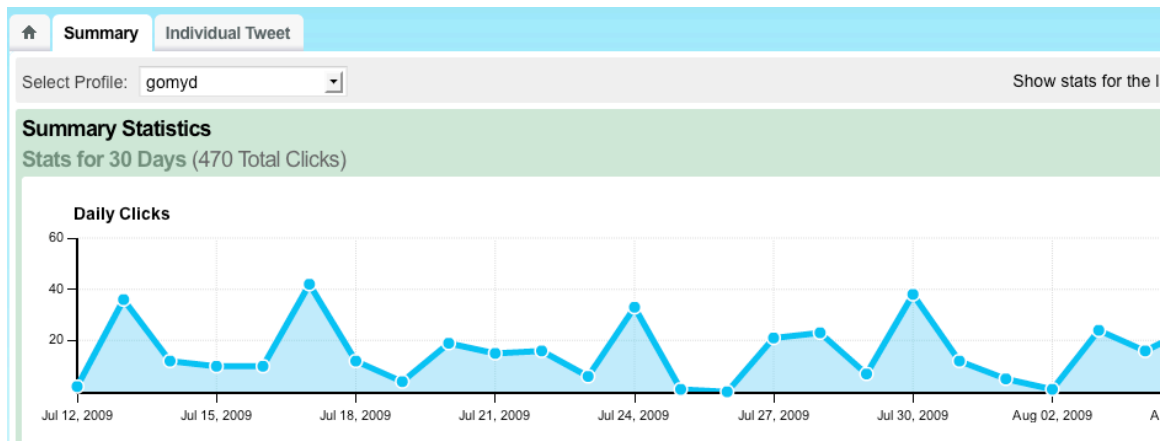
**Send**

Now  Later 2009-08-11 6 : 10 pm

 Alert me by email when tweet is sent

[Shrink It](#) [Send Later](#) [Submit Tweet](#)

HootSuite's interface that allows you to post tweets at a later time.



HootSuite's ow.ly links track click-through rates and keep statistics.

If you would like to be able to tweet (that means update) from an event where you do not have a computer or a smartphone with a Twitter application, you can update through text messaging. To set up mobile update capabilities, go to <http://twitter.com/devices>.

## Twitter Lingo

### Followers

To see another user's updates in your home page feed, a third party application, or on your mobile phone, you need to "Follow" that user. On any user's profile page, you can view how many people that user is following and how many people are following that user.

### Replies: @

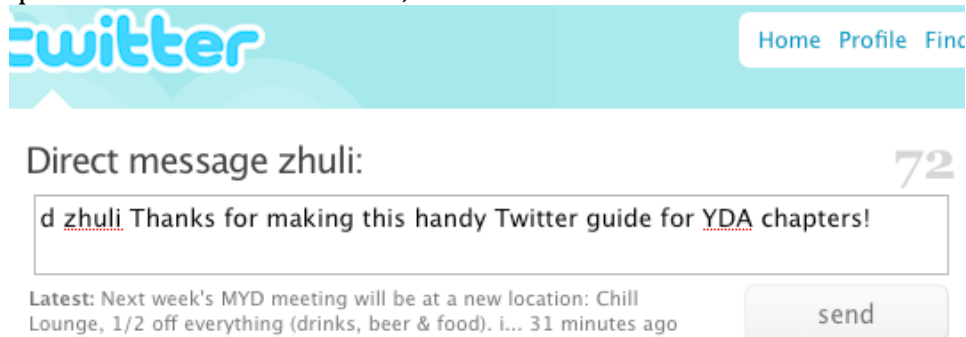
Twitter is a two-way conversation where you can do more than project your message to your followers. To reply to another user, you put @ and their username somewhere in your tweet. Most users will but the @ symbol and username at the beginning of the tweet (no space), like so:



For more information on how often to reply and when to engage in a conversation, see the "Content" section below.

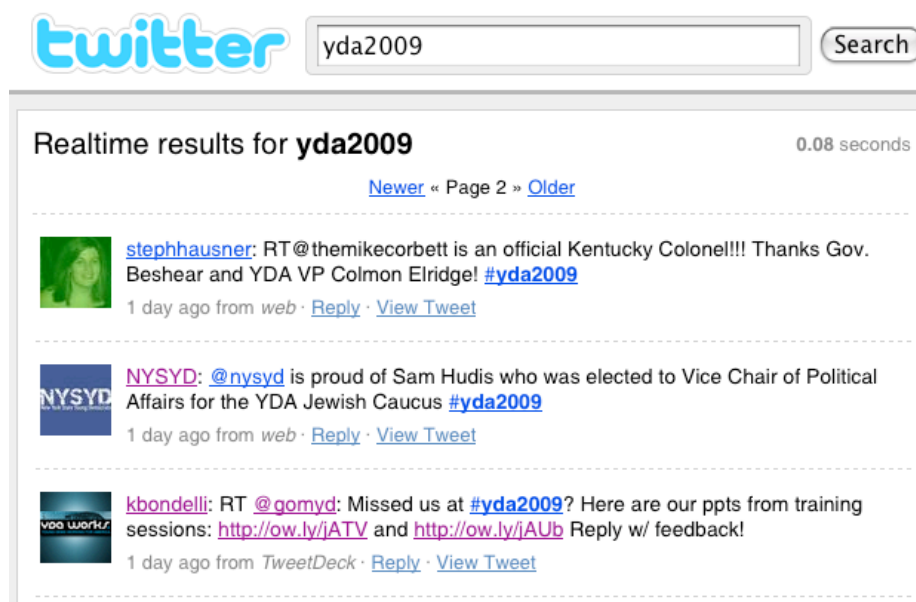
### Direct Messaging: DM

Twitter also allows you to send private messages to other users. We strongly recommend you use this feature with caution. A typo can mean your message intended to be private will be public, for anyone to see, including your followers. That said, if a user direct messages you, be sure to write back to him or her in the same manner, by direct message. To direct message another user, you put "d", a space and then the username, like so:



### Hashtags: #

A hashtag is like a tag on a blogpost. It identifies your tweet as part of a larger discussion. A hashtag is noted by a word that is preceded by the # symbol. In many applications and third-party tools, you can click on a hashtag and recent tweets in that discussion. You can also visit <http://search.twitter.com> for the same purpose.



*the very popular #yda2009 hashtag*

Some important hashtags to know and use:

- #topprog: used to identify leading progressive experts
- #tcot: top conservative tweeters. We encourage you to use this hashtag to fill the search feed.
- #p2: progressive discussions, often prompted by the ProgressiveExchange community (visit [progressiveexchange.org](http://progressiveexchange.org) for more information).
- #followfriday or #ff: other users that you recommend following for valuable content
- #women2follow: promoting strong female voices on Wednesdays to the larger Twitter community.

#### *Retweet: rt*

Unlike the @ reply, a hashtag or a direct message, the retweet has no extra functionality in Twitter system. It is used to denote a tweet that was originally posted by another user that you would like to share with your followers. It is denoted by rt or r followed by the @ sign and username (making it a reply), like so:

RT @amnewyork: 'The Office' hometown tours in Scranton...  
<http://tinyurl.com/pww6p5>

about 6 hours ago from HootSuite



The retweet is useful, but we encourage you to create original content the majority of the time. The larger twitter community sees more value in original tweets than retweets.

#### *Shortcuts*

Twitter has many other shortcuts you can use, originally designed for mobile users, but available to anyone using the Twitter website or a third-party tool. One popular shortcut that will make your tweet private is to put "follow" and then a space and a username to follow another user.

For more shortcuts, see <http://help.twitter.com/forums/59008/entries/14020>.

### **Account Management & Best Practices**

#### *How to build a large following*

Having a large number followers means that your messages are reaching a larger audience and you have more credibility in the Twitter community. There are several tactics you can use to build your following:

- Use twitter search (<http://search.twitter.com>) to find those discussing local news, politics, candidates and important issues. Search the big political story of the day in your state by the elected official's or candidate's last name. Follow these individuals and they will likely follow you back.

- Follow first! There are many individuals you should follow right away: your chapter's board, members, local and national journalists and other YDA chapters. Twitter has a built-in feature to find email contacts of your already using Twitter available at [http://twitter.com/invitations/find\\_on\\_other\\_networks](http://twitter.com/invitations/find_on_other_networks).
- Post often, at least a few times per day, and keep your messaging relevant.
- Keep your content useful. Not sure how? See the "Content" section below.
- Twellow.com allows you to do an advanced search of twitter users to follow who will be more likely to follow you back.

#### *Divide & Conquer: Get other members of your YDA chapter to help you out*

Nearly all YDA members are in school or at work during the day, the most active time for Twitter. At your next chapter and/or board meeting, make an announcement that you are looking for help and that you will train those willing to help you.

Be sure to use HootSuite to collaborate and post tweets together. You also should give your team of Twitter helpers guidelines on what time of content to post, along the lines of our "Content" section below.

#### *Always Always ALWAYS Follow Back*

To show your new followers that you care about their message and are happy to have them following you, be sure to follow them back. The only users who you should not follow back are spam. (You will know spam when you see it.)

#### *Promote Your Twitter Account Elsewhere*

Let your members know that you are on Twitter by mentioning it at meetings, linking to your profile page on Facebook, email blasts and your website.

### **Content: What to say?**

#### *Announce Your Blog Posts*

Use either the built-in RSS functionality at HootSuite or [twitterfeed.com](http://twitterfeed.com) to automatically tweet new blog posts. If you do blog regularly, be sure to include a variety of other content to supplement blog tweets.

#### *Replies*

Always reply to those who reply to you. In addition, reply to those in your home feed, those discussing big local news (found via Twitter Search) and journalists.

#### *Stay Local*

You will gain more followers and more replies by talking about local issues that affect your members. In New York, we like to tweet about planned public transportation legislation, city council members and specific neighborhoods.

### *Stay Positive*

Be professional and stay positive. Try not to attack too much and be a positive, hopeful voice, much similar to the voice of YDA.

### *Share Event Information*

Post links to your event pages that are on Facebook, eVite or your own site. Remind followers about events on the day of and always let people know when your events include open bar, drink discounts or the key to a big turnout: FREE BEER.

### *Share News*

Inform your followers with breaking news. Include links that are shortened (not sure how to shorten? See below.) Always credit the reporters or sources of these news items using reply functionality. This helps local reporters know about your chapter and more likely to follow you back.

### *Talk About Youth/Millennial Involvement in Politics*

Part of your message as a chapter is that youth can make a difference in politics and effect real change. Get followers excited about our progress and influence. A great news source for these kinds of stories is Future Majority:

<http://www.futuremajority.com>

### *Ask Open Questions*

Once you build a large following, ask open questions and gauge opinion, such as "What do you think of City Council's vote to extend term limits?"

### *Contests*

Hold contests where entries are a retweet of one of your messages. News blog Political Wire ([@pwire](#)) holds such contests on a regular basis.

### *Link to Facebook and Your Chapter's Web Site*

Link back to your online presence elsewhere. Your twitter followers may be more comfortable commenting on blogs or joining you on Facebook. Be sure to remind your followers that you are online and active in more places than Twitter.

### *Live-Tweet Your Events*

Only live tweet your events when they are large and of interest to those not attending, like candidate forums for local and state races, and when you have more than 200 followers.

### *Mention Followers who are Members*

Once you find your members on Twitter, feature them, reply to them and get them more involved.

### *Mention Officers and Board Members by User Name*

Encourage your officers and board members to use Twitter as well. Remind them that Twitter is public and to keep it professional. Their Twitter accounts represent your chapter as well.

#### *Non-Political Tidbits*

You can mention non-political news that is fun, exciting and unlikely to be seen elsewhere. Here's an example:

Only in New York: Intersection just named for Run DMC <http://ow.ly/fKLy>

12:28 PM Jun 24th from HootSuite



#### *Keep It SFW*

Your twitter feed is one part of the public face of your chapter. You must be safe for work and professional at all times. Anything less may be an embarrassment to you and YDA as a whole. If you are not sure if the content is appropriate, run it by two people on your team, or air on the side of caution and do not tweet it, move on to something else. "Google doesn't forget." Even tweets are indexed by google.

#### *Avoid Weather, Food, Movies, and Personal items*

Nobody cares that you are tired, hungover, in need of caffeine, hating the weather or didn't like a movie. (Do this on your personal account, but nobody will care there either.)

#### *Be Human*

Twitter for your chapter may not be a personal account, but be human and keep it casual. Followers respond to a personal voice and conversation.

#### *Reach Out to Advocacy Organizations*

Many non-profits and PACs are now on Twitter too. Find them and follow, mention their research and use Twitter to let them know you support their efforts.

#### *Link-Shortening Tools*

There are countless tools out there to shorten the length of URLs (web addresses) that are helpful for keeping your tweets to 140 characters. Popular tools include tinyurl.com, bit.ly, twu.rl and is.gd. If using HootSuite, we recommend using their built-in shortener, ow.ly, so you can track click-through statistics.

Still confused?

Follow [@gomyd](https://twitter.com/gomyd) to see how we do it.

### **More resources and information**

- Deanna Zandt's Twitter Guide:  
<http://www.deannazandt.com/2009/02/26/a-non-fanatical-beginners-guide-to-twitter/>
- Mashable talks about non-profits on Twitter:  
<http://mashable.com/2009/03/19/twitter-nonprofits/>

- Twitter Applications: <http://twitter.com/downloads> and <http://www.squidoo.com/twitterapps>

If you feel this guide has been helpful to your YDA chapter, please send us a tweet and let us know with the following message:

Hey @gomyd! Thanks for posting the guide to using Twitter for your @youngdems chapter. Great tips!

If you would like to ask a question, please send us a reply to @gomyd or Julie Blitzer (the author of this guide) to @zhuli.

You can also email [social@gomyd.com](mailto:social@gomyd.com) or [info@gomyd.com](mailto:info@gomyd.com) if you would like to ask questions by email.

## **YDA Chapters on Twitter**

*Note: This list is not comprehensive. Many of these twitter accounts are not active and few follow the model described above. Nonetheless, we encourage all YDA chapters to communicate, share and grow their movements with each other on Twitter.*

### National

YDA: @youngdems

College Dems of America: @collegedems

High School YD: @HighSchoolDems

Stonewall YD: @StonewallYDems

### Alabama

University of Montevallo: @UMYoungDems

Birmingham: @BHMYoungDems

### Arizona

State YD: @YDAz

### Arkansas

State YD: @YDArkansas

Arkansas Tech University: @ATUYoungDems

University of Arkansas: @uayd

Faulkner County: @YoungDemFaulkCo

Pulaski County: @PCYDArkansas

### California

State YD: @CAYoungDems

State CD: @CACollegeDems

East Bay: @EBYD  
Orange County: @OCYD  
San Francisco: @SFYD  
South Bay (San Diego): @SBYD  
UC Berkeley: @CalDems  
UC Merced: @demsucm  
UC Santa Barbara: @UCSBdems  
Santa Barbara County: @sbcyd  
Sacramento County: @sacyoungdems  
SF State University: @DemsatSFSU

Colorado  
Arapahoe County: @arapahoeyd

Connecticut  
State YD: @CTYoungDems  
Greater New Haven: @GNHYD

Delaware  
State YD: @DelYoungDems

Florida  
State YD: @FLYD  
State CD: @FLcollegedems  
Jacksonville: @JaxYoungDems  
Alachua County: @ACYDems  
Brevard County: @BCYD  
Broward County: @BYDs  
Lee County: @LeeYoungDems  
Hillsborough County: @HillsYoungDems

Georgia  
State YD: @GeorgiaYDs  
State CD: @collegedemsofga  
Atlanta: @YDAtl  
Cobb County: @CobbYoungDems

Illinois  
State CD: @ILCollegeDems  
7<sup>th</sup> Cong. Dist. YD: @07CDYD

Indiana  
Vanderburgh County: @VandyYoungDems  
Jasper Country: @JCYoungDems  
Ball State University: @BSUDems  
Indiana University: @IUCollegeDems

Purdue University: @purduedemocrats  
University of Indianapolis: @UIndyDemocrats

Kansas  
State YD: @KansasYoungDems  
State CD: @KSCollegeDems  
Kansas City: @KCYoungDems

Kentucky  
Jessamine County: @JessamineYD  
University of Kentucky: @UKCollegeDems  
Fayette County: @FCYD

Louisiana  
Stonewall: @StonewallYDL  
Tulane University: @tulanedems

Maine  
State CD: @MECollegeDems

Maryland  
State YD: @YoungDemsofMD  
Allegany County: @alleganyyd  
Cecil County: @CecilYoungDems  
Harford County: @HarfYoungDems  
Montgomery County: @MoCoYoungDems  
Prince George's County: @PGCYD  
Carroll County: @YoungDemsCC

Massachusetts  
State YD: @MAYoungDems  
State CD: @CollegeDemsofMA  
Boston University: @BUCollegeDems  
Emerson College: @EmersonDemocrat  
Harvard University: @HarvardDems

Michigan  
Ingham County: @InghamYoungDems  
Central Michigan University: @CMUCollegeDems  
Lansing Community College: @LccStudentDems  
University of Michigan: @umichdems  
Michigan State University: @MSUDems  
Saginaw Valley State University: @SVSUCollegeDems

Missouri  
State YD: @YDMissouri and @YDMO

University of Missouri: @mucollegedems

Nevada

University of Nevada-Reno: @NevadaYoungDems

New Hampshire

State YD: @NHYoungDems

New Jersey

State YD: @NJYDs

Somerset County: @SCYD

Rutgers University: @RUDems

New Mexico

University of New Mexico: @UNMCollegeDems

New York

State YD: @NYSYD

Broome County: @bcyoungdems

Jefferson County: @jeffcoyoungdems

Manhattan (New York County): @goMYD

Nassau County: @NassauYDs

Niagara County: @niagaraYD

Rensselaer County: @renssdems

Westchester County: @westchesteryd

Binghamton University: @Collegedemocrat

Fordham University: @FordhamDems

Cornell University: @CornellDems

Columbia University: @cudems

Stony Brook University (SUNY): @StonyBrookDems

North Carolina

State YD: @ydnc

Duke University: @dukedemocrats

Guilford College: @GuilcoDems

Ohio

State YD: @OhioYD

Cuyahoga County: @CCYoungDems

Hamilton County YD: @hcyd

Kent State University: @KSUDems

Ohio University: @OUCollegeDemocrats

Youngstown State University: @YSUCollegeDems

Oklahoma

State YD: @YDOK

State CD: @OKcollegedems

Oregon

University of Oregon: UOcollegedems

Pennsylvania

State YD: @PAYoungDems

State CD: @pacollegedems

Philadelphia: @PhillyYoungDems

York County: @yorkyoungdems

Clarion University: @CUPYoungDems

Shippensburg College: @ShipCollegeDems

Temple University: @TempleCollDems

University of Pennsylvania: @PennDems

University of Pittsburgh: @PittCollegeDems

South Carolina

Greenville: @YDGreenville

Tennessee

Wilson County: @WCYoungDems

University of Tennessee: @utdems

Texas

State CD: @txcollegedems

Dallas County: @DCYD

Dallas Stonewall: @DallasSYD

Rockwall County: @RCYD

Sam Houston State University: @BearthDemocrat

University of North Texas: @CDNT

Utah

State YD: @YoungDemsofUtah

Virginia

State YD: @VAYD

Liberty University: @LUCollegeDems

New River Valley: @NRVYD

Southwest Virginia: @SWVAYoungDems

University of Virginia: @UVaDems

Washington

State YD: @YDWA

Whatcom County: @wcyd

University of Washington: @YDUW

Washington, DC

District CD: @DCCollegeDems

Catholic University: @CUADemocrats

George Washington University: @GWCollegeDems

Georgetown University: @GUCollegeDems

Wisconsin

Brown County: @browncountydems

UW-Milwaukee: @uwmcollegedems

Wyoming

State YD: @YDofWY