



The State Journal-Register • Springfield, IL • The Oldest Newspaper In Illinois

[Back](#) [Home](#)

Share: [ShareThis](#) [Print](#) [Comment](#)

## Candidates take advantage of e-campaigning

By RYAN KEITH

THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Nov 29, 2009 @ 11:30 PM

Last update Nov 30, 2009 @ 06:24 AM

Republican Jim Ryan asks Facebook fans who they're rooting for in college football. Gov. Pat Quinn touts a new campaign endorsement from his barber. Republican Adam Andrzejewski asks for \$20 donations to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This definitely isn't campaigning for governor in 1980, 1990 -- or even 2006.

The emergence of the Internet as an everyday part of life has political candidates pushing the boundaries of "e-campaigning," from Facebook and Twitter posts to YouTube videos and blogs.

Those running for statewide office see the Internet and its new social networking tools as inexpensive, invaluable gateways to reach voters -- their way on their own terms.

"Is the Web the end-all be-all? Of course not," said Curt Mercadante, an e-campaign consultant for Ryan. "But it's a key component, and it allows us to do things in a way we've never done before."

But how much does the Internet focus really drive voter interest? Here is a look at what the campaigns are doing online and what that effort is producing.

### One-stop online campaign shopping

Candidates used to make token efforts at e-campaigning, with a basic Web site and e-mail list or blog for supporters.

But 2010 is greatly changing that. Democratic and Republican candidates for governor and other statewide races have colorful, image-driven Web sites touting their biographies and top issues and seeking online donations.

They also prominently tout all their social networking connections. Each has a Facebook and Twitter page, often with hundreds or thousands of supporters and followers. Their Flickr and YouTube sites offer up photos and campaign videos, some targeted solely for the Web.

Candidates feel they have to ride the e-wave as more people integrate the Internet into their lives. They're taking different approaches to how they use the tools.

Some keep it basic, linking Twitter and Facebook followers to new campaign announcements, new videos or news stories about their local visits. Others take a more personal approach, giving supporters insight they wouldn't get otherwise.

For example, Comptroller Dan Hynes tweets about college football and pro baseball in his run for governor. Republican gubernatorial candidate Dan Proft banter about college sports, movies and other interests.

Sen. Dan Rutherford takes it a step further. He offers Web site updates on cooking recipes, recaps of scuba diving trips and his new car for traveling Illinois while running for state treasurer as a Republican.

Rutherford said his "electronic yard signs" are drawing many compliments by opening new windows of communication.

"I'm not embarrassed by them," Rutherford says of his Web site offerings. "They fulfill all of my needs."

### Why they do it

Candidates generally agree marketing themselves on the Web is all about opportunity.

"No longer do taxpayers, voters and supporters need to wait for pronouncements from on high to learn what is going on in their government or in their candidate's campaign," said Raja Krishnamoorthi, a Democratic candidate for comptroller.

That bottom-up philosophy helped Barack Obama become president last year, using a strong Web-savvy promotion to generate grassroots interest and defeat Republican John McCain.

"A lot of folks say, 'I want to be like Barack,'" said Michael Cheney, a senior fellow at the Institute of Government and Politics at the University of Illinois who studies political use of the Web.

Mercadante said Obama succeeded online by making it a top priority. He says Ryan, the former attorney general making a political comeback, is taking the same attitude.

"We've managed to get our fingers into every single part," Mercadante said. "It's at the forefront of everything that we do."

#### **But does it really work?**

Campaign Web site offerings prove there's more to being successful than just having an online presence.

Candidates for governor all have similar elements on their Web site -- and right now, no one really sticks out for voters looking for something different.

"At this point in the campaign, they (candidates) are there largely because they want to make sure they have everything in play that they want to have in play," Cheney said. "I think in many ways the campaigns know they need to be saying things, so they're saying things."

Cheney expects the campaigns to strengthen online as January arrives, ahead of the February primary. He's looking for candidates to add more personal touches to their efforts.

"They're missing a point to humanize who they are," Cheney said. "There's too much dissipated energy. They're just trying to hedge their bets on all fronts."

The personal Web emphasis drew Natalie Cappiello to work for Alexi Giannoulias, the Democratic state treasurer now running for U.S. Senate. She first learned of Giannoulias' Web efforts -- including his personal posts -- while a student at the University of Illinois and signed up to do more earlier this year.

She says young voters like her are looking for candidates who make them and what they're interested in a priority. Key to that is providing plenty of information for curious voters without being overbearing.

"It's what they're already there for. It's definitely a strong way for us to explain what's going on. They go look for this," said Cappiello, who works out of the Chicago office.

But balancing the Web with the other parts of campaigning can be tricky.

"As you can imagine, Governor Quinn doesn't have much time for Facebook updates and tweets, so we have a new media team focused on online outreach," Quinn spokeswoman Elizabeth Austin said.

And some candidates have only a limited Web presence to this point.

Rep. David Miller is on Facebook, but only recently developed a site for his run for comptroller. Miller says that's because he's trying to target his efforts to reach and educate voters at the times they're really starting to pay attention.

"My campaigns have always been methodical," said Miller, D-Lynwood. "You don't want to sputter too soon."

Candidates say they'll try to distinguish themselves in coming weeks with online efforts focusing on promoting their message to motivate supporters and spread the word to those connected in new ways.

Look for them also to use online shortfalls of their opponents as points of contention.

"With all of the Web tools, content is our focus. Where some candidates will post updates on Facebook or Tweets like 'I'm having a cup of coffee,' our focus is to provide value-added content of a policy nature," Proft said.

Ryan Keith can be reached at 788-1518.

#### **Candidates on the Internet**

Here's a look at the Web sites and social networking pages of candidates for governor, with links taken from the candidates' Web sites:

##### **Pat Quinn, Democrat**

- Web site: <http://quinnforillinois.com>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pat-Quinn/108650015336>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/QuinnForIll>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/37928755@N04/>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/QuinnForIllinois>

##### **Dan Hynes, Democrat**

- Web site: <http://www.danhynes.com>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dan-Hynes/16431619078>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/danhynes>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/danhynes>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/danhynesforgovernor>

##### **Kirk Dillard, Republican**

- Web site: <http://www.dillardforgovernor.com/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/kirkdillard?ref=nf>

- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/KirkDillard>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/DillardforGovernor>

#### **Bill Brady, Republican**

- Web site: <http://bradyforillinois.com/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/people/Bill-Brady/1520889300>
- Twitter: [http://twitter.com/Bill\\_Brady](http://twitter.com/Bill_Brady)
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/bradyforillinois>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/billbrady>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/bill-brady/11/54a/146>

#### **Jim Ryan, Republican**

- Web site: <http://www.jimryan2010.com/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/JimRyanforGovernor>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/jimryan2010>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jimryan2010/>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/jimryan2010>

#### **Andy McKenna, Republican**

- Web site: <http://www.mckennagov.com>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Andy-McKenna/135908468231>
- Twitter: [http://twitter.com/andy\\_mckenna](http://twitter.com/andy_mckenna)
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/McKennaforIllinois>

#### **Adam Andrzejewski, Republican**

- Web site: <http://www.adamforillinois.com/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/GovernorAdam>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/adamforillinois>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/AdamForIllinois>

#### **Bob Schillerstrom, Republican**

- Web site: <http://www.bobschillerstrom.com/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/bob4gov>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/bob4illinois>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bob4illinois/>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/Bob4Illinois>

#### **Dan Proft, Republican**

- Web site: <http://www.proft2010.com/>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dan-Proft/91268353636?ref=ts>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/danproft>
- YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/danproft>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/danproft/>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/dan-proft/1/9b9/834>

#### **Social network posts**

Candidates for statewide office are using social networking sites Facebook and Twitter to both share political announcements and provide some insights into their personal sides. Here's a sampling of what candidates have been posting in recent weeks:

- "Thanks for your continuing support. Momentum Continues to Build!" -- Gov. Pat Quinn's post on Nov. 7.
- "VIVA MEXICO!" -- Gov. Pat Quinn's post on Sept. 29, with a link to a video of Quinn celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month.
- "We've got to fight hard for the people who are too rich to be poor, and too poor to be rich ." -- Quinn's post on Sept. 18.
- "Say NO to Gitmo in Illinois." -- Republican Adam Andrzejewski's post on Nov. 16.
- "It's official! We are on the ballot, and ready to put Illinois' house in order." -- Republican Andy McKenna's post on Nov. 2.
- "I would like to pay tribute to the nation's veterans today for their bravery, honor and service. Thank you for defending our great nation." -- Republican Bill Brady's post on Veterans Day, Nov. 10.
- "We will be delivering yard signs soon -- visit our Web site to request yours!" -- Republican Bob Schillerstrom's post on Nov. 16.
- "Nothing better than college bball; enjoying ESPN's tip-off marathon. Early look at possible tourney sleepers." -- Republican Dan Proft's post on Nov. 16.
- "Not just with policy ideas I save taxpayers' money. Save the \$10 I spent and don't bother going to see the movie 'Paranormal Activity'." -- Proft's post on Nov. 15.
- "Friday the 13th -- look for black cats, broken mirrors and 50 % tax increases on the middle class #abetterplan" -- Democrat Dan Hynes' post on Nov. 13.
- "Got lunch and met with voters at Garrett's in Rockford today. Lots of people saying we need to get back on the right track in 2010." -- Hynes' post on Nov. 12.

- "Late breakfast have OJ & leftover pizza: Giordano's stuffed spinach & sausage and Pontiac Mario's sausage & mushroom. Ready for the day!" -- Republican Dan Rutherford's post on Nov. 14.
- "Back from our fundraiser in Bloomington at Image Air. Really a lot of friends and support, catered by Avanti's so everyone was happy." -- Rutherford's post on Nov. 5.
- "Congratulations, President @BarackObama on your Nobel Peace Prize ... very proud of you and our nation at this moment" -- Democrat Alexi Giannoulis' post on Oct. 9.

---

Copyright © 2009 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a Creative Commons license, except where noted.