



But Does Washington Like It Back?

Facebook now connects one in two Americans and half a billion people around the world. Washington wants to know what the social network is doing with all that information. Can Facebook and the government ever be friends? **By Joseph Guinto**

Write a comment...



Facebook's friends: The social network has ten people in its DC office, including Adam Conner, Tim Sparapani, Marne Levine—who handle policy—and spokesman Andrew Noyes.

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DOUGLAS SONDRERS

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BROWN BIRD DESIGN

About five feet above the hardwood floors in Facebook's Washington office, a picture of Mark Zuckerberg's disembodied head is taped to a robotic camera. Look up at the camera, operated by unseen minions hundreds of miles away, and you catch the gaze of the world's youngest billionaire.

And then you wonder: Why is he laughing?

The answer may lie five feet below the camera, which is used to stream a public-affairs show called *Facebook DC Live*. There, perched on a rolling chair, is the face of Facebook in Washington: not Zuckerberg but a 26-year-old George Washington University graduate named Adam Conner.

There's not a digital-media strategist in the city who doesn't know Conner, who has been promoting Facebook as a political tool since 2006, when he worked for Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, a New York Democrat. Conner became Facebook's first Washington employee in 2007. Back then, Zuckerberg was 23 and Facebook had fewer than 100 million users. Lots of people in Washington hadn't heard of Facebook. And the company had neither the resources to put a robotic camera in a lofty Washington office and stream its content around the world nor any interest in having an office here at all.

"Facebook's first DC office was the living room of my apartment," Conner says, rolling his chair around beneath the camera. "If I had meetings, I'd have to go to a Starbucks."

Nearly two years' worth of grande Americas later, with Facebook surpassing 100 million users, Conner packed up his living room and rode an antique, collapsible-gate lift he calls "the elevator of death" up to this office—a narrow, makeshift space above the Ann Taylor Loft on Connecticut Avenue near Dupont Circle.

A few months later, with Facebook under siege for a disastrous change in its privacy policies—the company, in effect, declared that all those pictures of your dog and your kids and you in that ridiculous Halloween costume belong to Facebook—Conner was joined by Tim Sparapani, who had left his post as the American Civil Liberties Union's legislative counsel to work as a public-policy director for a company run by a kid 11 years his junior.

Facebook next hired a Washington communications director. Last year, the company hired two more people, including Marne Levine, who had served in the Obama administration and is now Facebook's

vice president of global public policy. This year, the office gained a ninth employee when Catherine Martin, who was a deputy assistant to the President in the George W. Bush administration, joined Sparapani as a public-policy director.

"This was enough office space when it was just me," Conner says. "But it's not enough now." So on April 1 the company moved into an 8,500-square-foot office above the Guess store on F Street in downtown DC.

That's enough room for nine people—in fact, it's enough for 40. Which happens to be the current size of Google's Washington office. And that's not mere coincidence.

Google came to Washington when many policymakers barely knew what Google was. So, too, Facebook.

Google's 27,000-square-foot office at 1101 New York Avenue, just north of Metro Center, still offers plenty of room for growth. So, too, Facebook.

And Googlers work in a brightly colored space that includes game machines.

"For now, we're going to have a lot of room to move around in and shoot Nerf guns at each other," says Andrew Noyes, Facebook DC's manager of public-policy communications.

"And maybe have Skee-Ball," Conner adds.

"Or hammocks," Noyes counters.

Or maybe filing cabinets and computer servers.

The truth is that Facebook may not have a very fun 2011 in Washington. Because it traffics in billions of bits and bytes of the most revealing personal data, the company has become, according to *Brandweek* magazine, the poster child for a debate over online privacy. That debate seems ready to boil over, and Facebook, more than even Google, stands to get burned. At least five pieces of legislation are being considered on Capitol Hill, and a sweeping new Internet regulatory regime is under review by the Federal Trade Commission and the Commerce Department.

All of that could disrupt the process by which Facebook connects its more than 500 million users to its advertisers and application developers, the companies that build information-sharing tools and games for Facebook users. And that could interrupt the company's revenues just as Facebook may be eyeing

a 2012 initial public offering of stock.
So you have to ask again: Why is the disembodied head of Mark Zuckerberg laughing?

Facebook By the Numbers



300+

Members of the US House
of Representatives who have
Facebook pages



\$2 billion

Facebook's 2010 revenue,
according to a Bloomberg report
(Facebook doesn't disclose
revenues)



Adam Conner, ASSOCIATE MANAGER, PUBLIC POLICY

Facebook's first DC office was in the living room of my apartment. If I had meetings, I'd have to go to a Starbucks.

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Part of the answer lies in the savvy staff now sitting in the office on F Street.

Conner, a techie who speaks in rapid-fire cadence, has helped spread the word about Facebook around Washington, helping create pages for hundreds of lawmakers and three dozen federal agencies and departments. And that has given Facebook influence in Washington.

"Facebook is able to curry tremendous political favor now," says Jeff Chester, who heads the Center for Digital Democracy in Washington, one of Facebook's leading opponents on privacy issues. "Any politician who wants to be elected nowadays needs to understand how Facebook works. And now they have a friendly lobbyist to call on to help them to influence constituents."

Three minutes. That's how long I've been standing in the darkened hallway outside the office of the speaker of the House waiting for an appointment with top GOP digital-media strategists. In that time, the speaker's gatekeeper has answered the phone five times. The gatekeeper listens silently and scribbles notes. Then to each caller she says, "Thank you. I'll pass your concern on to the speaker."

Spend three minutes staring at the gatekeeper for any member of Congress and you'll likely witness a similar scene. Sometimes the scribbles are more formal: Callers' names and numbers may be typed into a database. However it plays out, constituents' calls to Congress members have been an important facet of governing ever since the telephone came to the Capitol.

Facebook is changing that paradigm. It's allowing elected officials not only to hear from their constituents but also to respond to them, one at a time, without leaving their offices or the House floor or the back seat of a taxi.

"When people talk to me on Facebook, they know they are talking directly to me and not a gatekeeper," says Representative John Fleming, a Louisiana Republican who last year won a "new-media challenge" in which GOPers raced to sign up the most fans on Facebook and other social-networking sites. Fleming's approach to Facebook, which not all lawmakers take, is working. His page has nearly 27,000 fans. That's 4 percent of his district's population.

And what Fleming is doing—personally connecting with his Facebook fans—Adam Conner is encouraging others in Congress to do.

"We talk a lot about authenticity and how that means engaging in a two-way conversation on Facebook," Conner says. "But there are still plenty of folks out there who use Facebook as a one-way thing to get sound bites out there."

You get the feeling that Mark Zuckerberg—the real one—might say the same thing. Conner speaks in the multisyllabic vocabulary of a tech geek. There's a lot of "recalibration" and "extrapolation" and "aggregation" and "evangelization" and its more active variant, "evangelize," which, in a word, defines Conner's job for Facebook. He's there, he says, to "evangelize the product."



500 million

Number of current Facebook users worldwide

Can you imagine a lobbyist for, say, Exxon Mobil saying he's "evangelizing" on behalf of one of the world's most profitable companies? But Facebook inspires this kind of passion in its employees. Whatever you call it, Conner clearly relishes his job, which is part lobbyist and part salesman with a little tech-support guy thrown in. His mission: to spread the word that Facebook is the governance and communication tool of the future.

On that front, Conner may be preaching to the converted. Social media played a key role in the midterm elections that threw the House back into Republican hands, and both parties are battling to gain the online advantage between now and the 2012 elections.

Social-media services such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are in everyday use—sometimes every-minute use—by lawmakers. Especially Facebook. As one GOP digital-media aide puts it, "We now have a two-way dialogue with constituents that wasn't possible before Facebook."

Maybe that's why Facebook's Washington office is swamped with requests from lawmakers, news organizations, and government agencies that want to hear from the source how they can make better use of Facebook. Even the not yet elected have come calling. But Conner can't help everyone.

"On a practical level, there are 535 members of Congress, and then with challengers and the primaries, there can be thousands of people running for Congress," he says. "With me only having so many hours in the day, we prefer to work where we can to train in scale."

That means conducting what Facebook calls "candidate schools," where it trains anyone from corporate PR types to government offi-

cial in the latest ways to use Facebook to connect with mass audiences. Conner has headed candidate schools for the House Republican Caucus, the Senate Press Secretaries Association, the National Republican Congressional Committee, and a handful of congressional committees as well as new-media directors at the State and Defense departments and various intelligence agencies.

“Nothing can beat having Adam Conner come in and do a presentation to members of Congress,” says Katie Harbath, who was chief digital strategist for the National Republican Senatorial Committee during the 2010 elections. “That’s much better than me having to explain things like the privacy settings and what other people are doing with their Facebook pages.”

At least it *was* better. A month after our interview, Facebook made Harbath its tenth hire for the DC office. As an associate manager for public policy, she assists Conner in training Hill staffers and lawmakers to use Facebook better and in anything else that comes up. Such as when Conner was contacted around 9 PM by a US Army digital-media officer who believed someone was impersonating him on Facebook. Conner had the false identity eradicated from the service.

New Mexico Democratic senator Tom Udall is among the members of Congress who have gotten personal attention from Conner. Udall’s campaign set up a Facebook page during his successful 2008 run for office. Then, once he arrived in Washington, Conner helped Udall’s staff set up an official Facebook page for the state’s junior senator.

“The Facebook DC office has definitely been helpful,” says Dan Watson, Udall’s online-communications director. But that help, Watson says, hasn’t made the senator soft on Facebook. Udall, a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, is participating in hearings this year on Internet privacy.

Udall isn’t alone in having gotten direct assistance from Facebook. Every digital-media director on the Hill knows who Adam Conner is. And many have been aided by Conner or someone else in Facebook’s Washington office. Even House speaker John Boehner’s official Facebook fan page benefited from Facebook’s direct help. The DC office assisted in streaming the opening session of the 112th Congress live on Facebook—the first time the event had ever been shown on the site.

Some in Washington would rather that Facebook not be quite so cozy with Congress. Among the company’s critics is Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Infor-

mation Center, a small but boisterous outfit just up Connecticut Avenue from Facebook’s old offices.

“We suspect that Facebook’s role in assisting candidates with their political campaigns and with using various Facebook tools has actually diminished the interest of members of Congress in pursuing meaningful oversight of the company,” Rotenberg says. “If General Motors were to turn around tomorrow and give each member of the House Oversight Committee ten cars free and clear, everyone would jump up and down and say, ‘That’s not ethical.’”

For its part, Facebook doesn’t think it’s doing business differently than any other group in Washington. After all, Google lobbies government officials directly and provides search tools, YouTube channels, and other services to Congress and other government entities. But Facebook doesn’t deny that evangelizing the product yields a side benefit that could help when matters of policy come before congressional committees or Washington regulators.

“We spend a lot of time working with policymakers to educate them on what we do and what kind of changes we’re rolling out with the product,” says Marne Levine, who was chief of staff for President Obama’s National Economic Council before joining Facebook. “It is a lot easier to have a conversation with somebody who has firsthand experience using it than talking about it in theory. The more they use Facebook, the more they understand Facebook.”

And therein lies the core of Facebook’s lobbying strategy in Washington: education. The more legislators know about how Facebook works, the less inclined they’ll be to regulate the way Facebook handles personal data about its 500 million

users. At least that’s what Facebook is hoping.

This past year, the University of Michigan included Facebook in its American Customer Satisfaction Index for the first time, and although it found Facebook rated low—in the bottom 5 percent of all organizations surveyed, right down there with the IRS—privacy wasn’t the only problem. It was also Facebook’s ever-evolving interface that put people off.

Privacy advocates argue, however, that Facebook’s users would be angrier if they could track how the company was using their personal data for marketing and advertising, “but that information isn’t given to them,” says the Center for Digital Democracy’s Jeff Chester, a former investigative journalist. “Facebook is changing its privacy settings all

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Seven

Years since Facebook's launch
on February 4, 2004

Marne Levine, VP OF GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY

It’s a lot easier to have a conversation with somebody who has firsthand experience using Facebook than talking about it in theory. The more policymakers use Facebook, the more they understand it.

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Facebook

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the time. That makes it very hard for people to keep up."

Facebook has made two major revisions to its core "terms of service"—the never-read legalese that constitutes a binding agreement between Facebook and its users. In 2009, Facebook updated those terms to seemingly say that it owned everything its users put on the site and that it could do whatever it wanted with user information. The company backed off on that. But it updated the terms again last year, when it introduced new privacy controls. Earlier this year, Facebook allowed app developers access to some users' mobile-phone numbers and addresses but changed course on that, too, after users complained.

The current terms are available for users to read at any time. And users can personalize their privacy settings. So the question is: Whose responsibility is it to understand how Facebook is using personal data—the gov-

Says Facebook's Sparapani: "We trust our users to make the right decisions for them regarding their data and their information. We are empowering our users to take control over their data."

Facebook's critics have lobbed plenty of accusations at the company, but they agree on one thing: The company has hired well here. Tim Sparapani is an example. At the ACLU, Sparapani collaborated with some of Facebook's biggest opponents in Washington, including Rotenberg's EPIC, the Center for Democracy & Technology, and the Center for Digital Democracy. And though he's now a nemesis, few have a bad word to say about him.

"I've known Tim for a very long time, and he's a very good guy," says Chris Calabrese, who replaced Sparapani as the ACLU's leg-

islative counsel. "But we've obviously got larger issues going on. It's not about the personalities."

Sparapani, 37, doesn't disagree. Personal-privacy protection "is the world I come from," he says. "And I am really pleased that I have maintained close personal friendships and good Facebook friendships with a lot of these people. Because this is important stuff. We may disagree about the way to get there, but we do agree with the goal. The goal is to get more open and transparent and to give people more control over their information."

Facebook's terms of service require users



Ten

Number of employees
at Facebook's DC offices

to reveal some basic information about themselves. You can't opt out of that or of lots of other ways Facebook makes details about you and your friends available to anyone with an individual profile.

If there are two phrases that have so far defined most of what Facebook has been

dealing with on the policy front, they are "opt in" and "opt out."

It was the "opt in" aspect of Facebook's "instant personalization" feature last year that got the attention of senators Chuck Schumer of New York, Mark Begich of Alaska, Al Franken of Minnesota, and Michael Bennet of Colorado. They wrote a letter to Zuckerberg objecting to the fact that instant personalization exposes users' identities and those of their friends. With instant personalization, which is being tested on a handful of sites, Facebook shares any information you've allowed "everyone" to see in your Facebook privacy settings, including your birthday, your name, and your hometown. That gives users a more customizable browsing experience.

Log onto the Internet radio site Pandora, and instant personalization will create a radio station for you based on who your friends are and what you've listed as your interests—and if you haven't adjusted your privacy settings, it's the same information available to anyone with a Facebook account. Zuckerberg wasn't the only one Senator Schumer wrote to. He also sent a letter to the Federal Trade Commission, calling for an investigation into whether Facebook had breached its privacy agreement with users.

The FTC hasn't acted on that letter. And it probably won't. Instead, late last year it released guidelines for a new regulatory framework that would give the agency new authority to crack down on Internet companies that violate their terms of service. Congressional action would be needed to approve the FTC's framework.

That might not happen quickly. The Commerce Department has also proposed a new framework. Its sweeping proposal would establish an office of privacy within Commerce and give it the regulatory lead online. Some privacy advocates say that giving such authority to Commerce—whose job, writ large, is to promote American business—would be a

Tim Sparapani, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY

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win for companies like Google, which has endorsed Commerce's proposal, and Facebook, which has not.

Facebook's chief privacy counsel, Michael Richter, wrote to the Commerce Department early this year to explain that Facebook prefers "robust industry self-regulatory efforts, in combination with judicious enforcement by the FTC" as a means of addressing Internet privacy. In other words, it likes things just the way they are, thanks.

To help ensure that the government doesn't get too creative with new regulations, Facebook hired the law firm Fierce, Isakowitz & Blalock in February to advocate its positions on Capitol Hill and beyond. That's the same firm that Apple hired this year. The Sunlight Foundation reported that the company was also about to contract with lobbyists at Elmendorf/Ryan, a firm that works for Microsoft and others.

Both of those firms will help Facebook in the United States. But some of its biggest worries lie overseas. Facebook isn't keen on the strict personal-privacy protections already in place in the European Union. And that's where the Commerce Department could help.

Think about it this way: The Internet is, in many ways, based in the United States. Google is here. And Google is the biggest online power. Facebook is here, and its 500 million users are spread all over the world (more than 100 million are in the United States). As both fans and critics of the company like to point out, if Facebook were a country, it would be the world's third-most populous. And Facebook nation would prefer not to have dozens of different privacy treaties all around the world. Though Facebook officials are careful how they phrase it, what the company wants is one privacy standard all over the globe.

Is that going to happen? No one can be sure. "This is an area that is still new, and people are actively discussing what the world should look like in that regard," says Marne Levine. "We're still rather small, and we don't have a footprint around the world in terms of our policy front. But 70 percent of our growth comes from outside the US, so we have a vested interest in what other countries are doing in terms of regulation or legislation or their principles."

For Levine, Facebook is still new. She left the Obama administration to join the company in the middle of last year. Also on her résumé: two years as chief of staff to Harvard president Lawrence Summers. The same Lawrence Summers who is depicted in the film *The Social Network* as shooting down twins Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss's efforts to discipline Mark Zuckerberg, who the twins say crafted Facebook out of their idea. Levine wasn't working for Summers when that hap-

pened, but she was attending Harvard's MBA program when Zuckerberg was still running through the quad in his Adidas sandals. (Another Facebook/Summers connection: Sheryl Sandberg, the company's chief operating officer, was Summers's chief of staff when he was Treasury Secretary in the Clinton administration.)

"Marne is a very, very practiced, smart, veteran Washington thinker who, from what I understand, is very well respected," says David Kirkpatrick, author of *The Facebook Effect*, a thorough account of the company's history that, unfortunately for him, did not get turned into an Oscar-winning film.



\$50 billion

Valuation put on Facebook as part of a Goldman Sachs-DST investment

Kirkpatrick met with both Sheryl Sandberg and Marne Levine at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last year. He says it's clear that Sandberg, Levine, and Elliot Schrage, Facebook's vice president of global communications, marketing, and public policy, are the leaders at headquarters on political policy.

Facebook's DC office is also in frequent communication with Randi Zuckerberg, Mark's sister, whose role includes marketing duties and setting strategy on US elections and "social change." After the 2009 earthquake in Haiti, she helped implement a plan by the company's Washington staff to establish a page where Facebook users could connect with dozens of relief agencies. That evolved into Facebook's Global Disaster Relief page, which now has 500,000 fans.

Randi's brother isn't as in touch with the Washington office. Mark Zuckerberg has made just one public appearance in Washington. He donned a tie last year to meet with members of Congress, including Utah Republican senator Orrin Hatch.

In February, he dressed up again for a private dinner with President Obama and more than a dozen tech-business leaders in Woodside, California.

But author Kirkpatrick, who knows Facebook as well as anyone outside the company does, says Zuckerberg is involved in setting Facebook's policy agenda. "Mark is a very, very mature 27-year-old," Kirkpatrick says. "Nobody ought to take the distorted account in *The Social Network* as indicative of what kind of person is leading Facebook today. He is an extraordinarily smart, strategic, methodical leader."

Pull up your browser and type this into the Google search box: "How does . . ." Odds are the first suggested result you see will be ". . . Facebook make money?," closely followed by ". . . a bill become a law?" They aren't unrelated questions.

As popular as Facebook is, because it's a free service lots of people don't understand its business model. Plenty of experts don't understand its business model, either—at least not well enough to figure out how Goldman Sachs earlier this year came up with a reported \$50-billion valuation on a seven-year-old company that has never had more than \$2 billion in annual revenue.

Facebook makes money off advertising—those little ads you see on your Facebook page—as well as partnership deals with app developers and external Web sites. But it isn't selling ads in a traditional sense. It's selling data.

Not your data. Not exactly.

"Facebook doesn't share your information with advertisers and never sells your information to anyone," Adam Conner assures me. Andrew Noyes says the same thing—exactly. So does Marne Levine. It's the primary talking point at Facebook DC, one of the complicated things the company is trying to explain to policymakers.

As Conner puts it, Facebook information is "anonymized in an aggregate." That's a fancy way of saying that what advertisers buy from Facebook is access to a pool of people who share certain interests or are located in certain parts of the world, or both. It's not access to you personally—it's access to people like you.

This gives Facebook economic incentive to push you to disclose more of your information. The more Facebook can tell marketers about you, the more valuable that aggregated data becomes.

But if a bill limiting Facebook's ability to control and to sell your "anonymized" data becomes law, Facebook won't be worth \$50 billion anymore. Because it's that data that separates Facebook from online competitors such as Google and Yahoo. Even with information anonymized in an aggregate,



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CLASSIFIEDS

Facebook can tell marketers more about who you are, how old you are, where you are, and what you like than anyone else. Any action limiting its ability to do so could hinder the company's future.

In the near term, Facebook's primary worry should be with the FTC and Commerce—and with regulators overseas, where most of Facebook's users are. But if Congress also moves to enact some type of privacy legislation, that could pose a problem as Facebook grows. "The law is slow," says the ACLU's Calabrese. "Technology is fast. It's tricky to craft broad legislation that deals with these problems today but that won't be obsolete tomorrow."

That's one reason Facebook's DC office is working to convince policymakers that self-regulation is the best policy—and that Facebook's economic interest in keeping its users happy offers better protection for their data in the long term than any government intervention could. "Without the trust of our users," Levine says, "we don't have a service."

And what is that service? Kirkpatrick says Facebook is rapidly becoming a "repository for identity." When I spoke with him, Kirkpatrick was in an airport on his way back home to New York. "I just went through security using my driver's license," he told me. "My license has some information about me, but Facebook has more than that. Facebook knows more about me than New York state does. That's a fact."

And because Facebook trades in real people exchanging information with other real people—some of whom are members of Congress and advisers to the President of the United States, as well as that annoying guy you went to high school with and hadn't spoken to in a decade before he "friended" you—it's rapidly becoming a complex communications service. Kirkpatrick thinks Facebook is morphing into a part of the Internet's infrastructure.

In time, much of what we do online could be done through Facebook. That's because its greatest attribute is us. Facebook contains our real identities, a more authentic "us" than the version that's on, say, our driver's licenses. Is the address on your license up to date? Your photo? That information on your Facebook page is likely current, perhaps up to the minute, because your friends are watching you.

And now Facebook is pushing our identities out into the broader Internet. The "like" button you see everywhere feeds information about us to other sites and to Facebook, where our friends see what we're doing and what we like and where they decide if they, too, "like" what we do. Content providers and advertisers respond

to what's being liked by making or trying to sell more of it—a continual, self-sustaining loop that involves hundreds of millions of people who may or may not have any idea what's happening. This is what policy-makers are grappling with.

"The government has generally done a very poor job of understanding the Internet," Kirkpatrick says, "and Facebook has made the Internet even harder to understand."

This much seems clear: Facebook is for now a one-of-a-kind service that provides communication among people. That sounds a lot like a communications monopoly. And, oh, how government loves to regulate monopolies.

"Facebook and Google and some other companies have to start worrying about being seen as utilities," says Patrick Kerley, senior digital strategist at Levick Strategic Communications. "That means the government could start getting more and more involved in the operation of those companies to ensure that the American people are not being taken advantage of."

Regulating Facebook and Google as utilities would mean acknowledging that both lack serious competition and have become pervasive forces in the lives of millions. And then there are the cops.

"Facebook is one of the primary tools of law enforcement around the world today," Kirkpatrick says. "If you're a detective, no matter where you are, Facebook is likely to give you clues, leads, and important information—even if you don't ask for the company's cooperation." And that has the attention of Calabrese at the ACLU. He says that no matter how strict Facebook's privacy settings are or how robust its controls to keep your data locked down, current law doesn't precisely define what the FBI or police can and can't make Facebook tell them.

That's a concern for the ACLU and for Facebook. Both are part of the Digital Due Process Coalition, which meets in Washington to hash out the future of online policing everywhere.

A quick recap of the issues engaging Facebook's Washington office suggests that its staff here has its hands full. First, there's the task of expanding government's presence on Facebook. Then there are concerns about securing—or maybe sharing—private personal data, such as home addresses or phone numbers. And it would be good if a world standard for regulation could be worked out and if the digital powerhouses—Google and Facebook—could avoid being treated as a new Ma Bell. Never

mind the question of having law-enforcement agencies subpoena information about Facebook users.

It seems like more work than ten people can handle.

Which may be one of the reasons why, as this article was going to press, Facebook was reportedly wooing former White House press secretary Robert Gibbs to join the company as a communications executive. Gibbs has denied this, but if he's hired he could deliver powerful White House connections and a rapport with national media, which could instantly elevate Facebook's status in Washington.

The *Los Angeles Times* concluded earlier this year that Facebook remains "a bit player" on the lobbying scene, spending just over \$350,000 last year, compared with Google's \$5.2 million. But with new hires already in place and a busy year ahead for Facebook in Congress and elsewhere—plus at least one Skee-Ball machine to buy—that bit player may soon find itself in a leading role. **W**

Joseph Guinto doesn't have a personal Facebook page, so he created an account for "Bob Ewing" while researching this story. A former White House correspondent for Investor's Business Daily, he has contributed to American Way magazine, National Geographic Kids, Kiplingers.com, and other publications. Guinto, or Bob, can be reached at joeguinto@gmail.com.



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