

How to Testify to a Legislative Committee

Giving public testimony before a legislative committee can be an exciting and fulfilling experience if you are prepared. Your testimony may influence the committee's action. It also becomes a part of the permanent record and may be used in future research.

Know your Audience

The members of the committee are citizen legislators meaning they have a full-time occupation outside of being a legislator. Legislators care and appreciate that you have taken time out of your day to come and testify before them. Here are some things to remember as you address the committee:

- Be respectful
- Do not accuse committee members of causing a particular problem
- Resist the temptation to scold, put down, or insult the decision makers or other witnesses. This tactic will likely alienate them from the cause
- Legislators appreciate the time you take to travel, prepare and testify before their committees. Remember that all of these legislators are also people in your community too.
- You can find out more about the committee you are testifying before here: <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/committees>

Be Clear and Know the Issue

Let the committee know if you are supporting or opposing the bill or just providing important background information. Support opinions with as many facts as possible. Be knowledgeable of the other side of the story. You may be asked to discuss the differences. Draw from your own knowledge and personal/professional experience.

Be Familiar with the Committee Process

Know the location of the building, the meeting room, and the meeting time. Meeting schedules can be found here: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/2017-01-08>

- If possible, attend a committee meeting before you testify to become familiar with the process and room layout
- Agendas will be posted outside the meeting room. Check to make sure the measure you are testifying for has not been removed from the agenda. The measures may not be heard in the printed order
- When you arrive at the meeting sign the witness registration sheet and indicate if you are testifying in support or in opposition to the bill. Witnesses are not necessarily called in chronological order



Presenting Your Written Testimony

When are you called to testify, give copies of your testimony to committee staff (usually located to the side of the dais) before you begin your presentation. The number of copies requested is printed on the bottom of the committee meeting agenda. Agendas can be found here:

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/LIZ/Committees/Meeting/List>.

- Begin your presentation by addressing the chairperson first, then members of the committee. *“Chair _____, members of the committee..”*
- For the record, state your name, address, and the organization you represent
- State whether you support or oppose the legislative measure being heard and briefly explain. Do not read your testimony word for word—Prepare an outline
- Have a ten minute version and a one minute version of your testimony prepared
- Thank the committee members and offer to answer question. *“Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer questions.”*
- When a member asks you a question, always acknowledge the chair first and respond: *“Chair _____, Senator/Representation _____, the answer to your question is...”*