

★ TESTIFYING AT A COMMITTEE HEARING

Committee meetings are open to the public and provide a forum for you to express your views about proposed legislation, budgets and other issues. Providing testimony may influence the committee's action. It also becomes part of the permanent record and may be used in future research. Make your testimony clear, brief and compelling. Use real-life stories to make complex issues meaningful and personal. Here are some tips for testifying:

- 1. Know the meeting time and location.** *Legislative committee agendas are posted 24 hours in advance at www.leg.state.ut.us; click on Committees. Meeting date, time and location are found on the meeting agenda. Check to make sure the issue you are following has not been removed from the agenda. Plan to arrive early--agenda items may not be heard in the order in which they appear.*
- 2. Follow committee procedures.** *Contact the staff fiscal analyst in advance of the meeting to request permission to testify and to be placed on the committee chair's list of those wishing to speak. Find out what procedures are used and rules you will need to follow. For assistance, call the Office of Legislative Fiscal Analyst at 538-1034.*
- 3. Know your audience.** *Learn everything possible about committee members. In addition to their public service, they have full-time jobs. Legislators are always pleased to be addressed by their name.*
- 4. Respect committee protocol.** *Address the committee correctly; for example, Madam or Mister Chair and Members of the Committee. Respect time limitations and be courteous.*
- 5. Prepare a formal statement of your position.** *Keep your message focused and brief. Speak from your own knowledge or personal experience. Support your opinion with clear, understandable facts. Be prepared to summarize your message in one minute—that may be all the time you're allowed.*
- 6. Anticipate questions and opposition.** *Be knowledgeable of the "other side of the story." You may be asked to discuss the differences. Research who opposes your position, why and what they are saying about the issue. Consider potential questions beforehand and how you will address them.*
- 7. Don't accuse committee members of causing your particular problem.** *Never scold, berate or insult lawmakers or other witnesses. This tactic will likely alienate them from your cause.*
- 8. Relax.** *Remember you are prepared to make a case for something that matters. Take a deep breath, and do your best.*

How to testify at a committee hearing:

Give a copy of your testimony to staff before you begin your presentation. Begin by addressing the chairperson first, then members of the committee.

"Madam/Mister Chair [Senator/Representative name] and members of the [committee name] thank for this opportunity to testify in support of [bill number/name]. My name is [state your full name, address, and the organization or group you represent]." Do not read your testimony word for word—prepare an outline. Keep your message focused. Speak from your own knowledge or personal experience. "In conclusion, [restate your position]. I ask you to vote in support of [proposed legislation]. May I answer any questions?" When a member asks a question, respond "Senator/Representative [name] the answer to your question is...." I thank the [committee name] for their concern and time."



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For more information call 801/968-3411.