

Tips on Testifying

Advice for a Successful
Legislative Experience



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Preparing for the Hearing

- Find out the bill number and download a copy from the legislative website.
- Determine which committee will be hearing the bill and find out who the members are.
- Decide what you support or oppose about the bill.
- Call or write members of the committee to let your views be known and that you will see them at the hearing.
- Check the legislative calendar for date, time, and location of the hearing.

Developing Your Testimony

- Type out your testimony and if possible, bring enough copies for each committee member.
- Keep your presentation to five minutes or less.
- Salutation should be to Committee Chair and Members of the Committee.
- First sentence should introduce yourself and tell where you are from.
- Second Sentence should state whether you support or oppose the bill.
- Remainder of testimony should discuss why and the impact it will have on your family.
- Bring a picture of your family to go along with your testimony.

Getting to the Hearing

- Plan to get to Concord early.
- Park at a meter on the street (2 hour limit) or the parking garage on N. State St. (unlimited meter parking @ \$.25/ half hour).
- Hearing will be in either the State House (SH) or the Legislative Office Building (LOB). The State House is the building with the gold dome on Main St. and the LOB is directly behind it on 33 N. State St.

Getting to the Hearing (cont.)

- Find the hearing room. Posted outside the door is a schedule of hearings for the day so make sure you are at the right place.
- Be aware that unless your bill is first on the schedule, they will probably be running behind and you may have to wait in the hallway.
- When you enter the hearing room, there will be a table with either a sign in sheet or a pile of pink index cards. This is where you will sign in as either in favor of, or opposed to, the bill and indicate if you wish to testify.
- Be sure to turn your cell phone off.

Testifying at the Hearing

- When the Chair calls the hearing to order, they will call the sponsor(s) of the bill to testify first and then invite any other legislators who wish to speak.
- Often legislators will be followed by testimony from the state agency affected by the bill.
- Citizens will be called in order of sign up to testify. Depending on the size of the crowd, this could take awhile.

Testifying at the Hearing (cont)

- When your name is called, walk to the desk and hand your written testimony to the clerk for distribution to the committee.
- Introduce yourself and either read or summarize your written testimony. Show the committee your family picture. Keep it to five minutes or less.
- If several people have already given similar testimony, shorten your presentation. The legislators will appreciate it.

After Your Testimony

- When finished, thank the committee and ask if they have any questions.
- Get up and return to your seat or leave the hearing room.
- In most cases, the committee will not vote on the bill until a later time so there is no reason to stay.

Random Thoughts

- Allow plenty of time in Concord. Hearings rarely start or end on time. If you have to leave, give your written testimony to the clerk or someone who is willing to read it for you.
- If you see a seat, grab it. If not, you may be standing for a long time. There is a lot of coming and going during hearings so seats will open up.

Final Thoughts

- Many people decide to bring their children with them to testify. This can send a powerful message to the legislature. Just keep in mind that you both may have a long wait and it could get very boring.
- Relax and enjoy the experience. The legislators really do appreciate the fact that you took the time to come talk to them.