

Testifying Before a House Legislative Committee

How A Citizen Can Testify Before a House Legislative Committee

Colorado has an open legislative process. All committee action on bills and amendments is conducted in open sessions. You may attend any of these meetings.

House committees meet on a regular schedule during the session in the committee rooms between the elevators in the Capitol basement.

Once a bill has been introduced in the House (called “First Reading”), the Speaker assigns the bill to a committee for study and consideration. The committee chairman determines when a bill is to be scheduled for a hearing. Public testimony is permitted at most hearings.

You can find out which committee will be hearing the bill in which you are interested by call the Information Center at 303-866-3055 or by inquiring in person. The Information Center and the Bill Room are located on the lower level in the Legislative Services Building. This building is across from the Capitol on 14th Street. Copies of original bills, the status of bills, and an index of bills are available in the Bill Room. The Sunday metropolitan newspapers carry listings of most of the bills schedule for committee hearings.

Hearings before the Colorado House Committees are generally informal but **PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

Before The Committee Hearing

- Find out when and where your bill will be heard.
- Plan your testimony. It is helpful to have written copies of your comments available.
- If other citizens are testifying on your bill, try to work with them to coordinate testimony prior to the hearing to avoid duplication.

At The Committee Meeting

- **BE ON TIME FOR THE HEARING!**
- “Sign-up” sheets are usually available prior to hearings. To sign up, see the sergeant-at-arms located in the hallway of the House Committee rooms or the committee staff in the scheduled hearing room.
- Usually, once a hearing is closed on a particular bill, no further testimony is heard. Sometimes there are large turnouts at a hearing and not everyone has a chance to speak. You may be asked if you favor or oppose the bill. You may always submit written testimony.
- Wait your turn. The chairman will announce the beginning of the hearing on a particular bill. The bill’s sponsor is usually the first speaker. After his testimony, the chairman then may ask for testimony from proponents and opponents.
- Begin testimony by addressing the chairman and committee members. Give your name, address, and state why you are there. For example: “Mister, or Madam, Chairman and members of the committee, my name is John Q Public from Denver. I’m in favor of this bill because, etc.”
- Be courteous in your language and address.
- Be brief. Do not repeat what others have said. The hearings are informal, so be conversational.

- Do not be nervous or worried about doing something wrong. There is no right or wrong way to testify. Representatives are your friends and neighbors who are elected to represent you and they want to hear what you have to say.
- There may be questions from the committee members. Respond to the questions as well as you can. You need not be embarrassed because you do not have a specific answer.
- While sitting in the committee room, do not clap, boo, cheer or disrupt the hearing.

After The Testimony On The Bill

Do not expect immediate committee action following a hearing. The bill may be laid over until another day. All committee votes are public. You may stay after the hearing on your bill and listen until the end of the committee meeting.

If your bill or the vote on your bill is postponed and the chairman does not announce a date for further consideration, check with the Information Center for rescheduling of the bill.

Remember: Representatives want to hear what you have to say!