



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO

Tips for Testifying Effectively

Revised September 5, 2017

Prepare:

Generally speaking, each speaker has about three minutes to comment, but you should prepare for two minutes. Make your most important point first. Prepare your presentation to include two or three key points. To sound more confident and persuasive, it might be helpful to practice reciting your testimony with a friend or family member. Also, consider preparing a written version of your testimony to submit to the committee. At the very least, prepare your oral comments in writing and try to memorize them.

Arrive early:

The room may fill up fast, so to be sure that you have an opportunity to speak, arrive early enough to get a seat. You may have to complete a sign-up sheet before the hearing begins. If you do not arrive early, you may have to wait a while to get into the room. Be patient and polite while you wait for your turn to speak.

Dress appropriately: Be neat and well groomed.

Listen to other testimony:

Make sure you do not repeat what a previous speaker has presented. If someone states something in their comment that you want to emphasize, introduce yourself and say something like “I support what was stated by the previous speaker;” instead of repeating it.

Identify yourself and thank the Committee

Start by thanking the chair and the other members of the committee for allowing you to testify. If the chair is a male then just, “Chairman,” if female, “Madame Chair”. Then give your name, and say where you are from. Give a clear and concise description of your position on the issue (see prepare, above). Of course, if you are speaking for an organization you should state your organization’s position on the issue.

Personalize your testimony:

The comments that make the strongest impact include a personal story of experience that relates directly to the issue.

If possible, don't read your testimony:

The committee or council will listen to and appreciate your testimony more if you tell it from the heart and not from a script.

Answer any questions:

It is usually acceptable for legislators to interrupt the presenter to ask questions. Answer the question and return to where you left off in your testimony. Be sure to answer questions honestly. If you do not know the answer, say so and, if possible, defer the question to another witness who may have the information. If you are asked questions you should direct your responses to the chair and then to the legislator asking the question.

Request action:

State exactly what you would like the committee to do: ASK THAT THEY SUPPORT (OR OPPOSE) THE BILL OR OTHER ITEM.

Offer solutions:

Whether stating a specific or general approach to an issue, solutions or feasible alternatives are always well received. Never blame anyone or make accusatory remarks

Thank the committee:

Close your presentation by thanking the committee. If appropriate, offer to answer any further questions:

Submit your testimony in writing:

If possible, submit your testimony or any other information supporting your message in writing to the committee staff person. -Mention that you are submitting written testimony when you are testifying.
