

Testifying Before Legislative Committees

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

Once a bill has been introduced, it is assigned 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 meetings.

Legislative committee meetings are generally informal, but it is important that you follow the guidelines and protocol listed below:

Before the Committee Meeting

- Find out when and where your bill(s) will be heard. You may do so by looking on the Internet (<http://www.leg.state.co.us>) for daily committee agendas when the Legislature is in session.
- Be prepared to wait – especially if the committee hearing is scheduled for “Upon Adjournment” (Upon Recess). This means that the committee will convene when the appropriate chamber (House or Senate) adjourns or recesses from the floor.
- Plan your testimony. Often you will be more effective getting your message across if you have prepared your testimony in writing for distribution to committee members. You can then orally summarize your remarks to conserve time.
 - The Association may have a prepared position paper or fact sheet on the issue that will assist you in preparing your testimony (check CSFCA Legislative Page on website).
 - If you have a handout, make enough copies for the committee and have extras. These handouts will be presented to the committee staff person when you are called by the Chairman to testify.

At the Committee Meeting

- Be on time. Find out when and where the meeting is to be held – check agendas.
 - Sometimes the order of bills is moved around on the schedule, at the discretion of the committee chair.
- Silence or turn off all cell phones, pagers and portable radios.
- Be sure to sign your name when you arrive and indicate whether you intend to testify for or against the measure. Sign-up sheets are available at all meetings.
- The Chairman will announce when a particular bill is coming before the committee for discussion. The bill's sponsor is usually the first to speak. After the sponsor's

introduction of the bill, the Chairman then may ask for testimony from proponents and opponents (the order of testimony is usually granted to the sponsor).

- **While waiting your turn to testify, listen to the testimony offered by others – take notes and be prepared to respond to testimony that opposes your position.**
- **When your name is called, take the designated witness seat.**
- **All testimony and all committee discussion must be addressed through the Chairman.**
- **Begin your testimony by addressing the Chairman and committee members. State your name, who you represent, and why you are there. For example: "Mr. (or Madam) Chairman, members of the Committee, my name is John Q. Public and I am testifying on behalf of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs Association. I am here to express our support for (opposition to) this bill because...."**
- **Be courteous and brief in your language and address. Try not to repeat testimony offered by previous witnesses. Be prepared to answer questions. Direct all responses to questions through the Chairman. Respond to the questions as best you can. If you do not know the answer, advise that you will get an answer to them.**
- **Do not be nervous as there is no right or wrong way to testify. Legislators are your friends and neighbors elected to represent you – they want to hear what you have to say.**
- **Demonstrations, applause, or addressing committee members or other witnesses in the audience are prohibited.**
- **Do not be offended if legislators come and go during a meeting. They have other commitments, including the need at times to present information or vote in other committees occurring simultaneously.**
- **At the conclusion of your testimony, thank the Chairman and committee members for considering your views.**

After You Testify

- **You are welcome and encouraged to stay for all discussion on your bill and to stay until the end of the committee meeting.**
- **Do not expect immediate committee action. The bill may be held until another day.**

Please contact the CSFCA Executive Director, Legislative Committee Chair, or Legislative Liaison if you have any questions.