

TIPS FOR GREAT PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

Find a Way to Ground Yourself before You Testify.

If you think you will be nervous or angry, find some way to ground yourself before you testify. Hearings can be high-stress situations, and the more prepared you are, the better. Here are a few possible strategies for being as calm as possible during your testimony, some or all may be useful for you:

- ✓ Practice, Practice, Practice – practice giving your testimony before hand. Time yourself so you know you are in the 2-minute limit. Try at least once to practice in front of a dog or a teenager – this will help with your tone. If either a dog or a teenager will listen to you for 2 minutes, your tone is just right!
- ✓ Wear or carry something meaningful to you. Wear a piece of jewelry or clothing that has meaning for you or makes you feel courageous, or carry something in your pocket that is helpful in this regard.
- ✓ If you pray, pray for calmness and effectiveness.

Make Three Points and Tell a Story!

- ✓ You are likely to have only 2 minutes to give your testimony. The decision-makers may be listening to hundreds of people in one day, so it is very important to be both clear and memorable.
- ✓ The best testimony at public hearings makes three points, and incorporates a personal story to show how your points are relevant to your life. Why are you even interested in this issue? Make sure the folks listening to you understand why.

Employ the 4 C's of Communication

- ✓ Clear – Define your message in terms of a problem and solution statement, as well as an action that can be taken to get to your preferred outcome. Specifically point out how legislators can help.
- ✓ Concise – Stick to the facts. Make sure your information is accurate and, when possible, have the sources to back up your information. Make your comments clear, brief, and to the point.
- ✓ Compelling – Speak from the heart. Talk about how the policy question affects you and people like you. Your experience and informed opinions are persuasive. Great testimony is both logical and emotional. Do not be afraid to be passionate – it is very persuasive, as long as you are not simply yelling.
- ✓ Cutting to the Issue – Have a single message that you consistently present. Sum up your statements and be sure to thank the decision-makers.

Bring Written Comments

- ✓ If you have more to say than the 2 minutes allows, bring along written comments also.
- ✓ See the tip sheet for effective written comments for more in this area.
- ✓ Be sure to include the Docket Info, and your name and town on your written testimony. It is great to also send a copy of your written comments to your own legislators, if they are not on the panel that you are testifying to.

Face the Decision Makers

- ✓ Make sure you face the decision-makers while you are testifying. Try to look at them directly at least a few times during your testimony.
- ✓ Remember to thank them when you are finished.