



A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO ADVOCATING AT THE WYOMING STATE LEGISLATURE

HOW TO TESTIFY ONLINE

Even with the best research and compelling arguments from our lobbyists, the most effective tool for persuading legislators is the voice of constituents speaking up for what matters to them — that's you. While it would be wonderful if everyone could take the time to drive to Cheyenne to testify in person, Zoom has made it possible to have your voice heard without braving the winter roads. There's no easier way to share what matters to you than testifying in committees remotely via Zoom. In 2023, most committees allowed remote testimony, and we hope this trend continues.

PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY

When testifying online, it's helpful to have written notes to guide you as you speak. We've compiled some tips for preparing your testimony here, but if you still aren't sure where to start, reach out to us — Outdoor Council staff are happy to offer advice.

Keep your testimony simple. Use plain language and avoid jargon. Be brief and aim for no more than 1–2 minutes of talking. **We suggest the following formula:**

- Introduce yourself. Clearly state your name and the organization you represent, or indicate that you are speaking as a citizen. If the latter, give a sentence or two of context for yourself: where you're from, what you do, and/or why you care about this issue.
- Focus on 1–3 points. Ask yourself, *What do legislators need to hear to be swayed?* Try to connect to the legislators' emotions by bringing your story and connecting it with their values, or commonly-held values.
- Provide a summary: Give 2–3 takeaways to leave fresh in their mind.
- Wrap up by thanking legislators.

Other tips for preparing:

- **Bring something new to the table.** Your case will be more compelling if you introduce a new perspective or find a new way to make a point instead of repeating comments that have already been made by others. Explain how you — or values important to you — will be impacted.
- **Practice ahead of time.** Read your testimony out loud to someone else.
- Consider emailing the committee to share your thoughts ahead of time.

TESTIFYING ONLINE: THE PROCESS

Get comfortable with the process. Peruse the legislature’s website (www.wyoleg.gov) to learn the process [for attending a virtual committee meeting](#). If you’re able, take the time to [listen to previous committee meetings](#) to get a feel for the members and their priorities. This will help you feel more confident when it’s time for you to testify.

Sign up to testify. [Committee meeting schedules](#) are available on the legislature’s website. To sign up, click the “Testify” button next to the scheduled meeting. (It can also be found by clicking “Details.”) The button will take you to a form to register for that specific committee and meeting date. Be sure to **sign up early** — sometimes there is a cutoff deadline for signing up. If there’s a topic that you may want to weigh in on, sign up. You can always decide not to comment at a later time.

Look out for instructions from the Legislative Service Office. After filling out the sign-up form, you’ll receive an email from LSO with a link to join the meeting.

Listen in. When the meeting starts, join using the link provided in the email. You’ll enter the meeting as a webinar attendee. It’s always good to show up early so that you are aware of the committee’s discussion prior to the public comment opportunity.

Give your testimony. When public comment for your bill is announced, you can indicate you wish to make a comment by “raising your hand” on Zoom (find this option in the “Reactions” button on your Zoom toolbar). When it is your turn to speak, you will be able to turn your camera and audio on so that the committee can see and hear you. Make sure your Zoom profile displays your first and last name and that you have no other audio playing on the computer or in the background.

TIPS FOR GIVING YOUR TESTIMONY

- **Always be respectful** in your demeanor and comments.
- All comments, questions, and responses flow through the chairman. Address the chairman formally, i.e. “Mr./Madam Chairman...” Traditionally, “chairman” is used, regardless of gender — only change the “Mr.” or “Madam.”
- Try to avoid repeating what another speaker has said. If your statement is similar to previous comments, simply state that you agree with a previous speaker and then add your new information.
- After you’ve finished giving your testimony, the chairman will ask the committee if they have questions. If they do and you don’t know how to answer them, that’s okay — just say that. If you do know, address the chairman with your answer.

It’s OK to be nervous! Citizen speakers have far more clout with legislators than paid, professional lobbyists. Elected officials see the “hired guns” often. But **citizen voices can be rare — which means your words mean more.**

AFTER YOU GIVE YOUR TESTIMONY

If you learn how your legislator voted, send a follow-up email. If they voted the way you wanted them to, thank them. If not, tell them why they should change their vote next time. Bills are voted on multiple times each session, so a follow-up email can make an impact.

Thanks for testifying.
YOUR VOICE MATTERS!