



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

## TESTIFYING IN PERSON

Testifying in person is one of the most powerful things you can do during the legislative session to advocate for what you value. Legislators are responsive to the concerns of their constituents, and providing testimony during a committee meeting — if you're able to make the trip to Cheyenne — is the best way of making your concerns known to them. Read on to learn how to prepare in-person testimony and how the process of providing testimony works.

### PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY

When testifying, it's helpful to have written notes to guide you as you speak. See below for writing tips. If you aren't sure where to start, reach out to us — Outdoor Council staff are happy to offer advice.

**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.

**Write your testimony.** Keep it simple with plain language and no 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:

- 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.
- **Practice ahead of time.** Read your testimony out loud to someone else.
- Consider emailing the committee to share your thoughts ahead of time.

## TESTIFYING IN PERSON: THE PROCESS

**Find out when and where your committee meeting takes place.** [Committee meeting schedules](#) are available on the legislature's website ([www.wyoleg.gov](http://www.wyoleg.gov)). Make a note of the meeting room. You can find a map of the Capitol and information about parking [here](#).

**Get comfortable with the process.** Peruse the legislature's website ([www.wyoleg.gov](http://www.wyoleg.gov)) to learn the process [for attending a 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 your turn to speak.

**Arrive early** to give yourself time to find the room and listen to the committee's discussion prior to the time for public comment. When public comment for your bill is announced, you will have the option to indicate you wish to make a comment by approaching the desk. When it is your turn to speak, press the button on the base of the microphone. Staff from the Legislative Service Office will be there to help you if needed.

**Let us know you're planning to testify!** If we are available, we would love to meet you, answer any questions you may have, and show you around. Contact Era Aranow, our Government Affairs Manager, at [era@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org](mailto:era@wyomingoutdoorcouncil.org).

## 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.
- To see this process in action, watch past committee meetings on the Wyoming Legislature's [Youtube channel](#).
- **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 in each chamberhouse during the session, so a follow-up email can make an impact.

Thanks for testifying.  
**YOUR VOICE MATTERS!**