

## Your Voice Matters – Tips for Testifying

Elected officials need to know what you think about proposed legislation. In addition to calling, emailing, or responding to a call-to-action, testifying at legislative hearings is another effective way to get your points across.

Legislators hear from lobbyists on a regular basis. Although this is an effective way for legislators to learn about the issues important to an organization, hearing from their constituents has far more impact.

Testifying before a legislative committee is an opportunity to influence public policy and make your views part of the public record. Although it can be a nerve-wracking experience, testifying doesn't have to be intimidating! Arizona Farm Bureau is here to work with you to help coordinate and formulate your testimony.

If you would like to get involved in making your voice heard at the Capitol, we want to hear from you. You can let us know if you are willing to testify on specific issues and/or attend a committee hearing by contacting the Government Relations team.

### The Do's of Testifying

**Get to the hearing early** and be patient if delayed.

**Know Your Audience:** It's important to know a little bit about the members of the committee you're speaking too. Not all of them are versed on agricultural and rural issues, so be prepared to answer questions. Keep in mind, if you don't know the answer to a follow-up questions, "I don't know" is an appropriate answer.

**Focus on A Single Issue:** Legislators are busy people. When you get their ear during a committee hearing or elsewhere, focus on the issue you want to address.

**Use Facts, Figures, and Statistics:** Legislators really don't care about hypotheticals. Be sure to bring the information backing up your statistics and make enough copies to hand out to the committee members.

**Use Personal Stories:** Research shows elected officials care about what happens to their constituents. Personal stories make legislation real and demonstrate the true impacts their decision making has on your life and livelihood.

**Keep comments short and concise:** Committee Chairs often impose a 2 to 3 minute maximum per speaker.

**Use proper Procedures When Addressing a Committee:** When you approach the podium, always open by introducing yourself, spelling your name, who you represent (it could be just yourself), and some very brief background information. If you're asked a question, remember that all communication must go through the chair.

**Thank them:** Legislators play a key, often thankless, role in our state's government. Please never miss an opportunity to thank them for their time and for listening to your opinions—even if they don't agree with you!

**Follow Up:** We can't simply testify in a committee hearing and then wash our hands of the bill. Following up with members of the committee is crucial to getting towards your desired outcome. You can follow up via phone, email or in person if possible. Legislators appreciate this and it gives them another opportunity to ask questions about the bill

### The Don'ts of Testifying

**Make Enemies:** Committee hearings aren't the time for emotionally driven or politicized comments. You should always be professional and respectful when delivering testimony.

**Refer to Bills Just by Numbers:** Your legislators will see hundreds and hundreds of bills throughout the legislative session, so be sure to know the bill title and reference it when speaking with or writing to your legislator.

**Mislead:** Again, it's about being professional and respectful. Honesty matters. Additionally, whatever you say in a committee hearing is public record.

**Use Acronyms:** Like we said above, not every legislator is going to be an agriculture buff. Be sure to refer to names in their entirety.

**Overwhelm:** Too much information can actually harm the effectiveness of your testimony. Keep your testimony to no more than a few minutes. Often only 2 to 3 minutes are allotted to each speaker. Focus on 1-3 key points and be concise and clear in your presentation.