



Public Testimony

North Dakota Native Vote

Overview

- What is public testimony?
- Why is public testimony important?
- Who can give public testimony?
- Where is public testimony available?
- When can you give testimony?
- How do I prepare for public testimony?

What is Public Testimony?

- Testimony: a formal written or spoken statement.
- Public testimony is a way for citizens to express their opinion on an issue in a formal way to the deciding committee or governing body.
- REMEMBER, YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO TESTIFY ON ANY BILL BEFORE A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE. THE LEGISLATURE WANTS TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.

Why is public testimony important?

- Public testimony has the potential to influence how leaders vote.
- Public testimony is a powerful way to shape the outcome of policy.
- Public testimony gives citizens an opportunity to share their community interests in legislation.
- Remember, public officials are elected by the people. They need your input because their job is to serve you.

Who can give public testimony?

- A private citizen appearing on the citizen's own behalf does not have to register as a lobbyist.
- Lobbyist: a person who takes part in an organized attempt to influence legislators.
- A lobbyist usually represents an organization. A private citizen gives personal testimony.
- You have the right, as do all citizens, to testify before the North Dakota Legislative Assembly on any bill or resolution.

Where is public testimony available?

- In North Dakota, every bill must have a public hearing before a legislative committee, must be publicly voted upon by the committee, and then must come before the full House or Senate for still another public vote.
- Your opportunity to testify on a bill comes at the committee hearing.
- Legislative committees meet in rooms on the ground floor or in the legislative wing of the State Capitol. You can come into a committee meeting at any time, even if the door is closed or a hearing is in progress.

When can you give testimony?

- All persons present usually get a chance to speak, but sometimes because of large turnouts it is not possible to give everyone a chance to speak
- Sign the witness sheet at the lectern. Give the bill number, whether you favor or oppose the bill, your name.
- The chairman announces the beginning of the hearing on a particular bill. The clerk will read the bill. The first speaker is usually the bill's sponsor.
- The committee chairperson then asks for testimony first from proponents and then opponents.

How do I prepare for public testimony?

- Be brief. Do not repeat what others have said. The hearings are informal so be conversational. Avoid being too technical. Avoid using acronyms or technical references unless you first explain what they mean.
- Do not be nervous or worried about doing something wrong. There are no "rights and wrongs" about testifying.
- Expect some questions and comments from committee members. These questions are not designed to embarrass you but merely to provide additional information.

Example: House Bill 1397

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee, my name is Nicole Donaghy, I live in Lincoln, ND and am an enrolled citizen of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Native Vote. I am providing testimony for NDNV today on House Bill 1397. North Dakota Native Vote does not support HB 1397 as it is proposed, but through these recommendations, I hope we can accomplish a fair method that will recognize Native American people and our unique role that we play in the political discourse of this State and Country.

Example: House Bill 1397 (2-3 Key Points)

- We recommend that Ruth Buffalo be appointed to the Redistricting Committee. We believe that she will adequately represent the interests of Native Americans in North Dakota and ensure the legislative redistricting plan is legally and constitutionally compliant.
- We also recommend amendments to develop an independent redistricting committee to create a redistricting plan that is transparent and representative of all North Dakotans
- We recommend single-member House districts. At-large elections dilute Native voting strength and deny us of any meaningful opportunity to participate in elections.

Tips to Remember

- Research hearing information.
- Testimony can be written and/or oral.
- Try to be brief with 3 key points.
- Oral testimony should be 1-3 minutes.
- Provide written testimony to the officials.
- Be informative, you know your community.
- Try to tell stories to get your point across.
- Connect with your local legislators
- Practice with your family or friends.

DO NOT DO THIS:

- Avoid any clapping, cheering, booing, or other demonstrations.
- Do not be long winded
- Do not make accusations
- Do not be afraid

Follow Up

- Some committees vote right after a hearing. Some committees wait until the end of the meeting or wait until committee work sessions to debrief testimony and vote.
- All committee action is public so you can stay to listen to committee debate and its vote even though the public comment portion of the hearing is over.
- Stay up to date on the ND Legislative Website:
<https://www.legis.nd.gov/>

Questions?



Thank You

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