



Colorado Legislative Council Staff

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MEMORANDUM

April 14, 2016

TO: Interested Persons
FROM: Legislative Council Staff
SUBJECT: Public Participation in the Legislative Process

Summary

Legislative committees are a very important part of Colorado's legislative process. At a legislative committee hearing, citizens have an opportunity to express their views and have them incorporated into the official legislative record. In Colorado, every bill receives a public hearing by one of the legislature's committees. This memorandum provides guidance to the public in participating in the legislative process.

Role of a Committee

The Colorado State Constitution requires that every bill be heard on its merits. When a bill is introduced in either the Senate or the House, it is sent to a Committee of Reference comprised of 5 to 13 legislators for review and public comment. The committee determines if the proposal should go forward in the legislature. After the committee considers any proposed amendments, it may vote to favorably recommend the bill to the Committee of the Whole, refer the bill to another committee, or postpone the bill indefinitely.

Committee schedules. When the legislature is in session, committees generally meet in regularly scheduled rooms at regularly scheduled times. However, they will occasionally meet in different rooms at varying times to accommodate a large audience or remote testimony. Monday mornings (typically 10:00 a.m. until noon) and Friday mornings (typically 9:00 a.m. until noon) are reserved for floor work. Committees with hearings in the morning meet from Upon Adjournment of floor work until noon. At the chair's discretion, morning committees may also meet from 7:30 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. Afternoon committees generally meet at 1:30 p.m. Click [here](#) for links to the committees' schedules and membership lists for the 2016 Legislative Session.

Contacting a Legislator

Contact information for every legislator, including office location, office phone number, e-mail address, and committee assignments, is located in the [legislative directory](#).

Tracking a Bill

Online bill information. The full text of bills, resolutions, and memorials, and their history, votes, fiscal notes, and committee reports are available online. Bills are named according to the house where they were introduced and the year. For example, Senate Bill 16-001 is the name of the first bill introduced in the Senate during the 2016 Legislative Session. Click [here](#) for an explanation of the bill names, or versions, based on where they are in the legislative process. The bill status sheet is used to track legislation as it moves through the General Assembly.

[Link to 2016 House Bills](#)

[Link to 2016 House Bill Status Sheets](#)

[Link to 2016 Senate Bills](#)

[Link to 2016 Senate Bill Status Sheets](#)

Bill scheduling. The chair of each committee determines when a bill will be heard. The House and Senate calendars, published daily, show the scheduled committee hearings and calendared bills. Both the full House and Senate meet in their respective chambers daily during session, generally at 10:00 a.m. on Mondays, and at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday through Friday. Changes to the published calendar are announced during these floor sessions and tweeted through the committee's Twitter feed.

[Link the House Calendar](#)

[Link to the Senate Calendar](#)

Online Video and Audio Resources

Floor proceedings. The Colorado General Assembly's House and Senate live floor proceedings are available in audio and video format on [The Colorado Channel](#). Archived sessions are also available [here](#).

Committee proceedings. All committee hearings are recorded and available live on the General's Assembly's webpage under [Live Legislative Audio](#). In the left-hand column, select Year-Round, House, Senate, Interim, or Other Committees to reveal a list of upcoming committee events. If the committee hearing is in progress, a link titled "Listen to Event" will be available to the right of the "Calendar" link. Links to archived audio for each committee category are listed lower on the page.

Committee Protocol

The purpose of a committee hearing is to gather information so that the committee can make an informed recommendation on a given bill or resolution. Public input is an important part of this process. As elected officials, committee members appreciate hearing the perspective of citizens and organizations on issues.

Preparing to testify. When preparing your testimony, plan to present in less than five minutes and be prepared to summarize the main points in one minute. If you have a personal experience related to the legislation, your story can provide valuable information for the legislators. However, be aware that the bill sponsor may propose amendments when presenting to the committee that may change your position on the bill. If you would like to suggest an amendment, it is best to speak with the bill sponsor prior to the committee hearing. It is a good idea to bring a copy of the bill with you to the hearing, and strongly recommended that you bring copies of your written testimony for the committee members, bills sponsors, and staff. If you are not sure how many copies to bring, 20 copies will be sufficient.

Signing in. Hearings usually start on time, but it is best to arrive 30 minutes early, especially for committees that meet Upon Adjournment. In order to testify, it is important that you sign in at the beginning of the hearing or as soon as possible. Each bill on the agenda will have a sign-in sheet that is located on or near the committee table. Fill out all of the information including whether you are in support of the bill, against the bill, or neutral. If you are not representing an organization, write that you are representing yourself. If you have any questions, please ask a member of Legislative Council Staff, who wear red name badges. If you have handouts or copies of your testimony for the committee, give these to staff at the beginning of the hearing or before you speak.

Testifying. The order of bills to be heard is posted outside the door of each committee that is meeting. The chair will announce each bill, after which the bill's sponsor will address the committee. The chair may then ask for testimony from proponents and opponents. Hearings are conducted using formal parliamentary procedure. You may find the following recommendations to be helpful.

- Begin your presentation by stating, "Mr. or Madam Chair ____, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. My name is ____, representing ____, and I am here to support/oppose this bill because . . ."
- Do not read your testimony word for word.
- Be brief and avoid repeating what other witnesses have said. Try to focus on points that have not been mentioned.
- At the end of your testimony, thank the committee members and offer to answer any questions.
- If a member asks a question, wait for the chair to prompt you, then state your name followed by, "Chair ____, Senator/Representative ____, the answer to your question is . . ." If you do not know the answer, it is always okay to say that you do not know. If you promise to follow-up, be sure to do so in a timely manner.
- Do not be offended if committee members come and go during a hearing. They have other commitments, including the presentation of bills in other committees that are meeting simultaneously.
- At a hearing with a large number of witnesses, there may not be time for everyone to testify.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices should be on a silent setting.
- Food and beverages are prohibited in the committee rooms.
- The chair has the discretion and authority to limit testimony, ask the sergeant-at-arms to remove a disruptive person from the committee, and clear the public from any hearing in the event of a disturbance which is disruptive to legislative proceedings.

Remote testimony. During the 2016 legislative session, five sites will be available for remote testimony for specific bill hearings: Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, Otero Junior College in La Junta, Fort Lewis College in Durango, Trinidad Junior College in Trinidad, and Adams State University in Alamosa. Any legislator may request remote testimony for a bill, but the request must be approved by legislative leadership. If you wish to testify remotely, you will need to sign up through the General Assembly's [registration website](#). Bills available for remote testimony will be indicated on the registration website, as well as the House and Senate calendars. In order for a remote testimony site to be available for testimony, at least one witness must be registered to testify at the site at least 24 hours before the hearing on the previous business day. The deadline is 10:00 a.m. for committees scheduled to meet Upon Adjournment. If at least one witness is registered by the deadline, additional witnesses may continue to sign up on-line to testify remotely until one hour before the scheduled hearing time and may sign up at the remote testimony site until public testimony on the bill concludes. Please note that there is no guarantee that all witnesses, including remote witnesses, will be permitted to testify on a bill, or that remote witnesses will be able to testify at a specific time.

The Information Center

The Information Center is located in Room 22 of the Legislative Services Building at 200 E 14th Ave, Denver, CO 80203. Copies of bills, calendars, and journals can be obtained there between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Information on the scheduling of a particular bill is also available by calling the Information Center at 303-866-3055.