

**Let your voice be heard,
or come listen as your legislature debates issues!**



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Teleconferencing Committee Meetings

Committees are at the center of Alaska's legislative process. The committee process provides legislators more opportunity to closely study a measure than would be possible in a floor debate. Committees may hear from many people who support or oppose the measure.

Your testimony may influence the committee's action. It also becomes part of the permanent record and may be used in future research.

Attending a Teleconference

It's best to reconfirm the day and time of a teleconference, either by visiting the Alaska Legislature website (www.akleg.gov), or calling our office, 424-5461. Appointments must be made for hearings occurring after 4:30 pm or on the weekends.

If possible, arrive 5-10 minutes early. You will be asked to sign in and indicate whether you are planning to testify.

Staff will assist you in the use of the equipment.

Testifying

1. Begin your presentation by addressing the chairperson first, then members of the committee.
"Chair____, members of the committee . . ."
2. For the record, state your name and the organization or group you represent.
3. State whether you support or oppose the legislative measure being heard and briefly explain.
4. Thank the committee members and offer to answer any questions. **"Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions."**
5. When a member asks you a question respond:
"Chair _____, Senator/Representative (state name), the answer to your question is . . ."

Relax! The members understand that this can be an intimidating experience--they don't expect a perfect presentation.

Protocol

Protocol is selected by the committee chairperson. The chairperson will decide the order of testifiers and may place a time limit on the length of testimony allowed. Typically, 2 minutes is allotted per person.

Helpful Hints

Know Your Audience

The members of the committee are "citizen legislators." They care that you have taken time out of your day to come and testify before them.

Resist the temptation to scold, put down, or insult the decision makers or other witnesses. This tactic will likely alienate them from your cause.

Know the Issue

Support your personal opinions with as many facts as possible. Be knowledgeable of the "other side of the story." You may be asked to discuss the differences. Draw from your own knowledge and experience.

Be prepared to summarize

While you are passionate about your subject matter and can easily speak for 10 minutes about it, you **MUST** begin by summarizing it in two minutes--that may be all the time you are allowed, or legislators may engage with you after your testimony.

Group Testimony

Select several people to cover different topics so the testimony is not repetitive. Address the problem, possible solutions, and your group's best solution.

Other Information

Legislators may want to know what, if anything, has been done in other states, what the costs might be, and what groups support or oppose your proposal. If you know the answers, you may want to include them, or better, email them this information.