

## How To Testify

Oregon's form of government is intended to allow decisions to be discussed and deliberated openly. This process allows members more opportunity to closely study issues. These guidelines are intended to assist persons who provide public comment.

Your testimony may influence the actions or outcomes. It also becomes part of the permanent record. Listed below are suggestions to help make your presentation successful.

### n Know Your Audience

The members of the committee are volunteers. They care that you have taken time out of your day to come to meetings and provide comment before them.

- Be respectful.
- Don't accuse members of causing your particular problem.
- Resist the temptation to scold, put down, or insult the members or other witnesses. This tactic will likely alienate them from your cause.

### n 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.

- Briefly define the issue (scope of the problem).
- Present potential solutions.
- Make a recommendation to the task force.

### n Be Familiar with the Process

- Know the location of the building, the meeting room, and the meeting time.
- Meeting agendas will be posted in advance.
- When you arrive at the meeting, sign the public comment registration sheet. Persons are not necessarily called in chronological order.

### n Presenting Your Written Testimony

1. When you are called to testify, give copies of your testimony to the staff member before you begin your presentation. The number of copies requested is printed on the meeting agenda.
2. Begin your presentation by addressing the chairperson first, then the other members.  
**"Chair\_\_\_, members of the task force . . ."**
3. For the record, state your name, address, and the organization or group you represent. If applicable, state whether you support or oppose the issue being heard and briefly explain. Do not read your testimony to the task force word for word. Prepare an outline.
4. Keep in mind you may have a five minute version of your testimony--be prepared to summarize it in one minute--that may be all the time you are allowed!
5. Thank the 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."**
6. When a member asks you a question respond: **"Chair \_\_\_\_\_, (state name), the answer to your question is . . ."**
7. Relax! The members understand that this can be an intimidating experience--they don't expect a perfect presentation.

### n 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.

### Special Needs

**If you require special accommodation in order to testify before a committee, please contact the task force staff 24 hours BEFORE the meeting with your request.**

## Helpful Suggestions when Testifying

- When you are called to testify, give a written copy of your testimony to the staff member before you begin your presentation.
- Begin your presentation by addressing the chairperson first, then the other members of the task force. "**Chair\_\_\_\_, members of the task force . . .**" Speak clearly and directly towards to the task force. (speak loud enough so the audio recording equipment will pick up your voice)
- For the record, state your name, address, and the organization or group you represent.
- Focus your testimony on recommendations drawn from your own knowledge and experience.
  - § Briefly define the issue (scope of the problem).
  - § Present potential solutions.
  - § Make a recommendation to the task force
- Keep in mind you may have a five minute version of your testimony--be prepared to summarize it in one minute--that may be all the time you are allowed!
- When a member asks you a question respond: "**Member name, the answer to your question is . . .**"
- Thank the 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.**"