

Do not be nervous or worried about doing something wrong. **There are no “rights and wrongs” about testifying.** Legislators are your friends and neighbors who want to hear what you have to say.

Expect some questions and comments from committee members. These questions are not designed to embarrass you, but merely to provide additional information.

Avoid any clapping, cheering, booing, or other demonstrations.

## AFTER THE HEARING...

Some committees vote right after a hearing, others wait until the end of the meeting, and some postpone voting until another meeting.

Remember, all committee action, including votes, are public so you can stay to listen to committee debate and votes even though the public comment portion of the hearing is over.

You can check with the committee clerk, your legislator, the legislative branch website, or 1 or 2 days later, the legislative information kiosk, to find out how the committee voted on your bill.

**REMEMBER, YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO TESTIFY ON ANY BILL BEFORE A LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE. THE LEGISLATURE WANTS TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.**

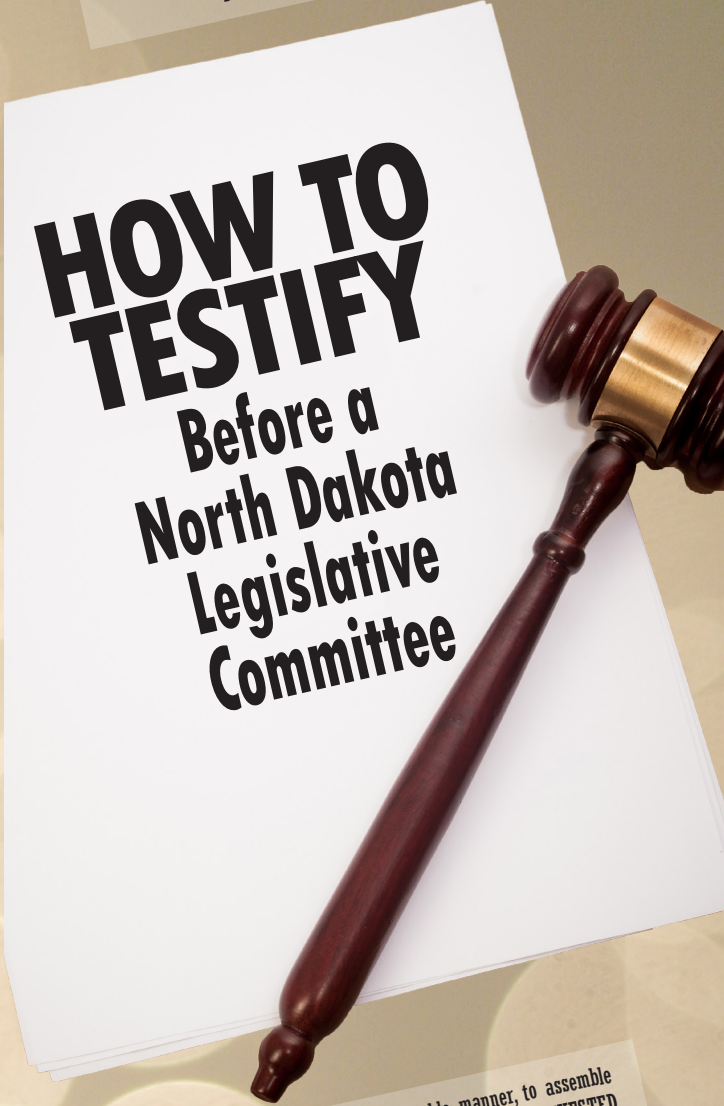
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State Capitol  
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“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, of prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to assemble AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.”  
- First Amendment, United States Constitution

# HOW TO TESTIFY

## Before a North Dakota Legislative Committee



“The citizens have a right, in a peaceable manner, to assemble together for the common good, and TO APPLY TO THOSE INVESTED WITH THE POWERS OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES OR FOR OTHER PROPER PURPOSES, BY PETITION, ADDRESS OR REMONSTRANCE.”  
- Art. I, Sec. 5, North Dakota Constitution

## YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

You have the right, as do all citizens, to testify before the North Dakota Legislative Assembly on any bill or resolution.

North Dakota has one of the most “open” legislatures in the nation. Every bill must have a public hearing before a legislative committee, must be publicly voted upon by the committee, then must come before the full House or Senate for another public vote.

Your opportunity to testify on a bill comes at the committee hearing.

Legislative committees meet in rooms scattered around the State Capitol. **You may enter a committee meeting at any time, even if the door is closed or a hearing is in progress.**

Lists of the legislative committees, committee members, and the days and places committees meet are available at [www.legis.nd.gov](http://www.legis.nd.gov) and at the legislative information kiosk in the hall between the Senate and House chambers.

You can find out which committee will be hearing the bill in which you are interested by checking the legislative branch website or by inquiring in person at the legislative information kiosk.

In addition to checking with the legislative information kiosk, you can find out which bills are being heard by which committees by reviewing the monitors on the legislative information kiosk, in the hall of the ground floor of the Capitol, and outside each committee room.

You can get copies of bills by accessing the legislative branch website or from the Bill and Journal Room. However, if the bill has been amended, the printed bill may not include the amendments.

**HEARINGS BEFORE NORTH DAKOTA  
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES  
GENERALLY ARE INFORMAL AND FEW  
RULES NEED BE OBSERVED.**

## BEFORE THE HEARING...

Find out when and where your bill will be heard. **Be on time for the hearing.** Usually, once a hearing is closed on a particular bill, no further testimony is heard.

Plan your testimony. It is not necessary, but it is helpful to have written copies of your comments available.

See if other persons will be testifying on your bill. If so, try to **coordinate your testimony prior to the hearing to avoid duplication.**

Contact the Secretary of State's office if you are going to testify on behalf of anyone but yourself to see if you must register as a lobbyist.

## AT THE MEETING YOU SHOULD...

Be present at the start of the hearing. 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.** If you do not get a chance to testify, your presence may be acknowledged and you may be asked if you favor or oppose the bill. And, you always may submit written testimony.

Sign the attendance sheet at the lectern or at the end of the table where you will testify. Give your name, the bill number, and if you favor or oppose the bill.

Wait your turn. The chairman announces the beginning of the hearing on a particular bill. The clerk will read the bill. The first speaker usually is the bill's sponsor. The chairman then asks for testimony from proponents and opponents.

Plan on following the custom (although it is not absolutely necessary) of beginning your remarks by addressing the chairman and committee members, giving your name and address, and why you are there. **For example: “Mr. or Madam Chairman, and members of the committee, my name is John Q. Public from Edwinton. I'm in favor of this bill because, etc.”**

Be brief. Do not repeat what others have said. The hearings are informal, so be conversational. Avoid being too technical.

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