



Guide to the Texas Legislature: Testifying and Lobbying

Testimony Guide:

Preparing to testify:

Once a bill is filed by an author, it is assigned to one of many committees, depending on the nature of the bill. You can find which committee a bill is referred to by visiting the [Texas Legislature Online website](#) and searching the bill number, or a keyword if you don't know what # it is. Or, if you're looking at bills being referred to a specific committee, for example the House Elections Committee or Senate State Affairs Committee, which both will primarily hear election reform related bills - then you can search by committee meetings to find hearing notices which will include what bills will be heard that day.

Search Legislation

Legislature:

☐ Word/Phrase ☒ Bill Number

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Search by bill #

Texas Legislature Online House Committee Meetings			
Home	My TLO	House	Senate
Legislation	Search	Committees	Calendars
House Committee on Elections (C240) Clerk: Teri Avery Phone: (512) 463-0772 Room: EXT. E			
January		Time	
01/21/2020		1:00 PM	
September		Time	
09/12/2019		9:00 AM	
May		Time	
05/17/2019		Upon first adjournment	
05/16/2019		9:45 AM (Canceled/see notice)	
05/15/2019		8:00 AM	
05/13/2019		10:00 AM	
05/06/2019		8:00 AM	
05/03/2019		Upon first adjournment	
April		Time	

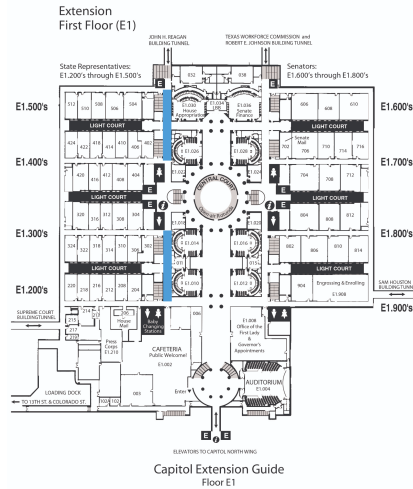
Search by upcoming meetings by committee

The committee's chair will determine when the bills will be heard in an open/public hearing which is when your public testimony will be possible. Usually a committee will announce when they plan to hear a particular bill at least 48 hours in advance.

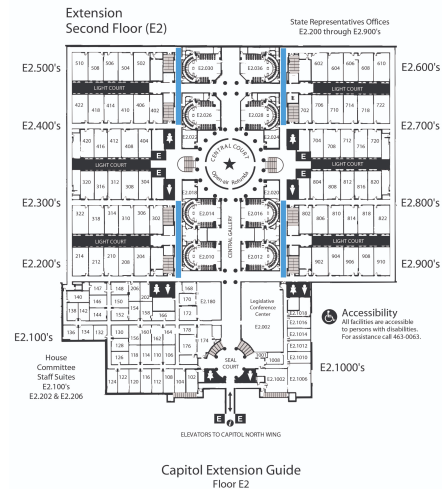
NOTE: If a committee's hearing time says they'll convene upon adjournment" that means that they will not hear the bill until they are finished with their floor calendar for that day and that time varies.

If you plan to provide oral, in person testimony then you must register either on the capitol wifi or at a capitol kiosks/ipads typically located in the extension (E1 and E2 floors) in the side hallways when you leave the main concourse towards the legislators offices. Registration typically opens at the morning of the hearing.

NOTE: the Senate has their own kiosks. If testifying against a bill being heard in a senate committee you will need to register on the Senate system which is located outside of the auditorium or chamber where the bill is being held, or in some instances the Senate committee may have physical cards you'll need to sign in person.



E1 House witness kiosks



E2 House witness kiosks

Submit a written testimony:

If you plan to not be able to stay the whole time, have handouts or longer written remarks than the allotted testimony time, or just want to provide written testimony - you can drop off copies with the committee clerk. If your local Representative or Senator is on the committee hearing the bill – you can also email or call your representatives office to share your position on the bill.

You can also submit written online comments on a bill through the online [House](#) portal. A public online portal for written comment is not available for the Texas State Senate.

Crafting your testimony:

You may have anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes depending on the # of people registered to testify & how many bills on the committee hearing that day. Come prepared with written or planned testimony.

1. Thank the committee then state your name, organization, and your position on the bill clearly:
 - “Thank you Chair _____. My name is ____, I am with _____, and I am here to oppose ____ bill.” or “I oppose ____ provisions in ____ bill #_____.”
2. Pick a theme to follow for the rest of your testimony:
 - Is there a specific provision or multiple provisions that you are opposing like restricting mail in ballot access, increasing criminal penalties, banning drive thru voting, etc
3. Connect the theme to your personal story:



FOUR PARTS TO A PERSONAL STORY			
CHALLENGE	CHOICE	OUTCOME	ASK
This is a challenge that you faced in your life that relates to what you're testifying about.	A challenge presents you with a choice. This is the choice that you made as a result of the challenge you faced.	As a result of your choice, you experience a specific outcome. This is what happened because of the decision you made in response to the challenge.	This is the ask you are making today based on your personal story.
Example: I wasn't registered to vote or educated thoroughly on the importance of voting in high school.	I became registered to vote after I graduated high school and became civically engaged.	I decided to come to the Capitol to advocate for Voting 101 programs in high schools, and push for more high school voter registration.	I ask that you please vote to expand civic education opportunities and pass legislation to increase HS voter registration.

4. Offer a solution or positive suggestions/ alternative strategies to resolve the issue
 - If your problem is that it's already hard and a complicated process to get registered, one solution here would be to create online voter registration or allow volunteer deputy registrars to register voters throughout the state.
 - Or it can be as simple as stating that we should expand access and make it easier for voters to cast a ballot rather than imposing more restrictions.
 - You should provide a clear directive for the committee, for example "I urge the committee to oppose a vote on ____ bill" or you can get specific, "I urge the committee to remove the language pertaining to ____" or "I urge the committee to correct issues in the bill that would cause ____" if you oppose a specific section in the bill.

Lobbying in the Texas Capitol, Guide to legislative office visits:

Before arriving at the capitol, plan who you're going to visit and what you're going to say:

- Your position on a bill will be most successful when shared with YOUR home Representative or Senator. You can find who your local representatives are by using the ["Who Represents Me"](#) resource from the Texas Legislature. You can find their office number by looking at their member page through the [Texas House](#) and/or [Texas Senate's](#) websites.
 - **NOTE:** An office's location can be broken down with the first number (unless it starts with G!) being the floor the office is on, if there is a second letter it'll be N/S/E/W which indicates which hallway the office is in on that floor, and then a period and number for each individual office.
 - E.g. If a member's page says their office is in E2.362 then they are on floor E2 and in the hallway that includes offices E2.300's, but if a member's office says 4S.2 then their office will be the one of the few offices on the 4th floor in the south-most hallway, and offices listed as GW.8 then they will be on the ground floor, west wing, and office #8.
- When you get to your member's office, first ask the front desk staffer for who is the point person on the issue area your bill would fall under (e.g. elections, voting, public education, etc).
- Plan your remarks:
 - Introduce yourself & what bill you're visiting about.
 - "My name is ____, I'm a member of ____ organization (if applicable), I'm a constituent in ____ neighborhood in your district (if applicable) and I'm meeting with you today about ____ bill."



- Provide a summary of your stance on the bill, and be sure to share any personal experiences you have with the issue if any apply.
 - *Stick to a theme or issue, if the bill is a large anti-voting bill, pick an issue like its changes to the process of voting by mail which would cause confusion, or that it creates felony charges criminalizing confusion, etc.*
- Share the position you want them to take on the bill
 - “Can we count on your members to vote for/against this bill?”
 - “As a constituent I wanted to make sure you heard my story and how this bill would impact many other people like me in and around your district.”
- If you are talking to a staff member and not the member, ask for how you can follow up or if any additional resources would be helpful in informing their members' vote.
 - If you are a part of an organization, you can pass this along to staff who can provide you with the additionally requested resources.
 - Remember to email and thank the staffer who you met with, and reaffirm the position you'd like them to take on the bill (voting for or against, amending in committee, etc.)

Logistical Guide, Getting to the Capitol:

Parking:

- Aim to arrive about 45 minutes to an hour before the hearing begins.
- Park at the Capitol Visitors Parking Garage (1201 San Jacinto Blvd, Austin, TX 78701)
- The parking fee is \$12 for the full day M-F and FREE on the weekends
- The garage is open 7am – 6:30pm, you will still be able to exit with your car after 6:30pm unless an event parking sign is listed at the garage when you arrive saying you must move it.

Accessing The Building:

- Use the North or South entrances to the Capitol; the Capitol building will open at 7:00 am.
- Proceed through security. This may take another 15 minutes or so.