How to Testify Before a ND Legislative Committee

You have the right...

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, and then must come before the full House or Senate for still another public vote.

Legislative committees meet in rooms on the ground floor (most often) or in the legislative wing of the State Capitol. You can come into 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 on the ND Legislature website (www.legis.nd.gov) and at the legislative information kiosk in the hall between the Senate and House chambers. Committee hearing schedules are also available on the website and can be viewed on the monitors by the information kiosk and in the hall of the ground floor at the Capitol.

Before the Hearing...

- Find out when and where your bill will be heard. Be on time for the hearing.
- Plan your testimony. It is not necessary, but it is helpful, to have written copies of your comments available.

At the Hearing...

- Be early to guarantee your spot to testify.
- If time runs out for verbal testimony, write and send it to committee leadership.
- Sign in at the podium. Give the bill number, whether you favor or oppose the bill, your name and who you represent if other than yourself.
- The committee chair runs the meeting and will call people for testimony.
- 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.
- There are no "rights and wrongs" about testifying. Legislators want to hear what you have to say.
- Expect some questions and comments from committee members.
- Avoid any clapping, cheering, booing, or other demonstrations.

Other Important Information...

- A vote can happen at the meeting, but can also be delayed.
- One or two days later you can check with the committee clerk, your legislator, or the legislative information kiosk to find out how the committee voted on your bill.
- You can stay to listen even though the public comment portion of the hearing is over.