

How to register for or against bills and testify at the Texas Capitol

How to register for or against a bill:

Registering your position on a bill is quick and easy, but requires you to make a trip to the Texas Capitol. Witness registration is open the day the bill is being heard, usually starting in the morning, and closes after the bill is heard in committee. For House committee hearings, you register using the iPads in the registration stations in the Texas Capitol Extension or in the John H. Reagan building, located just north of the Capitol. You may register for or against any bill in the House from a mobile device, as long as you're connected to the Capitol wi-fi Network. Head to the [witness registration website](#) to register from your own smartphone or tablet. For Senate committee hearings, you register by filling out a card that is usually located near the entrance of the hearing room.

Before registering your position, you need to know the bill number, which committee is hearing the bill and the time and location of the hearing.

- Using the bill number, you can find out which committee is hearing the bill using the [Texas Legislature's Bill Lookup](#).
- Then find the time and location of [House committee meetings](#) or [Senate committee meetings](#) on the Texas Legislature website.

When you register your opinion at the Capitol, you will provide basic contact information, specify whether you are representing yourself or an organization, register your position on the bill (support, oppose) and indicate if you will be testifying or submitting written testimony. After registering, your position has officially been entered into public record. You can stay and listen to the hearing or leave. Keep in mind: scheduled times for hearings are almost always predictions – during busy times at the legislature, it's very difficult to know what time hearings will actually happen until minutes before they start.

Check out the House's [witness registration website](#) or this [video](#) that walks you through the registration process.

Tips for testifying in front of a committee hearing:

Before the hearing:

Plan your testimony and if possible, print out approximately 20 copies. Practice your testimony and time yourself. You will only have 2-3 minutes to testify.

At the hearing:

If you want to testify, try to be at the hearing when it starts. All people registered to testify usually get a chance to speak, but if for some reason you do not get the chance to testify, your position on the bill will still be entered into public record and you can still submit a written copy of your testimony. Before the testimony period begins, the clerk will start the hearing by reading the bill and the legislator sponsoring the bill will answer questions from the committee.

You should start your testimony by addressing the committee chair and committee members and providing some identifying information, along with your position on the bill. For example: "Mr. or Madam Chair, and members of the committee, my name is Jane Doe from Houston and I'm here to testify in favor of (or in opposition to) HB/SB XXX."

Hearings will almost always have a time limit on testimony, which is typically three minutes, but sometimes only two. Be prepared for the committee members to ask you questions. They may even interrupt your testimony to ask you something. If that happens, stop and answer the question and then ask if you may proceed. If you provide statistics, be sure to use citations in your written testimony so

committee members can use it as a resource. You will hear a beep warning you that you have one minute left, which is your signal to make your most important point and wrap up your testimony. At the second beep, you should finish your sentence and stop talking or ask the chair if you may finish. If the chair asks you to stop, you must stop your testimony.

Remember that hearings are public and video recordings of hearings are entered into public record. Please be clear, concise and respectful.