

Tips on Testifying

By Ed Shackelford, President of Colorado Senior Lobby

Everyone has a first time at testifying in the Colorado State Capitol. My first time I signed up on the wrong sign-in sheet for testifying! So here are some general tips on being a good citizen lobbyist down at The Capitol:

1. Have confidence to go in front of the legislators. It can be an intimidating environment, in an intimidating building but remember that you belong there, and legislators want to hear from citizens and organizations impacted by bills.
2. Arrive with plenty of time so you can find the right committee room.
3. Sometimes there are overflow rooms for those testifying.
4. The Capitol has a library in basement. When the legislature is in session, agendas are available for the Senate and House. The agendas will tell you what bill hearings are happening that day and in what room. (Room assignments sometimes get changed. Check with Sergeant at Arms at desk outside committee rooms to verify.)
5. When you go to sign in to testify there are multiple sign in sheets. Be sure to use the sign-in sheet for the bill you want to testify on.
6. You will be treated with respect when you testify, however you could also get some difficult questions from the committee.
7. No food is allowed in committee rooms but you can have a capped water bottle.
8. The Sergeant-at-Arms - The Sergeant-at-Arms is elected by the members of the Legislature and plays an integral role in maintaining order and decorum in the Capitol. In addition to various ceremonial duties, the Sergeant-at-Arms' Office is responsible for assigning meeting rooms, taking/delivering messages for Legislators, running the Legislative Page program, supervising custodial staff, and operating the Capitol Police Department. (They will also go behind the committee and take pictures for individuals)
9. You can take pictures in the Capitol.
10. If you are going to testify, you need to clarify if you are testifying for Colorado Senior Lobby or as an individual citizen.
11. Realize that the legislators may be using computers and phones to do other business. Their email boxes are usually overflowing and they may not see your transmittal.