



## Witness Preparation Guidelines for a Civil Society Field Hearing

Are you preparing to be a witness? By following these guidelines, you can deliver a well-structured and impactful testimony that resonates with policymakers, local media, and the public.

Plan for 500-1000 words. (1-4 pages) Here is a [template](#) you can use. At the top of the document, please include:

- Witness name and affiliation if relevant
- Topic of Civil Society Field Hearing
- The date that the Civil Society Field Hearing took place
- The congressional district number code (i.e. AZ02 is Arizona's second district) which you can find at [Govtrack.us](http://Govtrack.us)
- There are many examples of formal testimony at this [House website](#).

## Structuring Your Testimony (aim for 5-7 minutes)

1. Introduce Yourself
  - State your name, background, and expertise.
  - Outline your experience and role in your organization.
  - Define whom you represent (e.g., individuals, employees, clients, patients, community groups).
  - Provide relevant statistics about your organization
2. State Your Position Clearly
  - Express concerns regarding presidential policies and impacts
3. Explain Why Your Perspective is Relevant
  - Highlight economic, social, or constitutional implications
  - Illustrate the broader effect on democracy or governance
4. Support Your Argument
  - Use data, research, and first-hand anecdotes
  - Develop clear talking points tailored to the hearing topic

Each witness should plan to speak for 5-7 minutes and give a copy of their testimony—digital or hard copy by request—to the moderator who will then submit it to an existing Civic Voice archive like the [Internet Archive](#) or a local [community archive](#). The moderator could also request that the local Member of Congress submit it for the Congressional Record. If the topic is about recent impacts of federal actions, [submit it to a site](#) maintained by the [Impact Project](#).

Witnesses should testify in panels of 3 or 4 individuals. More than one panel is typical in an official hearing. Plan for one to three panels for the Civil Society Field Hearing.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Impact on Constituents:** Lawmakers prioritize testimony directly related to their work and constituents.
- **Local impacts of Key Figures:** Address how a policy or law impacts you and the community you represent. Colorful stories make a good news hook.

Crafting a Compelling Testimony:

- **How to Make it Memorable:** Identify 2-3 key phrases or moments to leave a lasting impression
- **Show Personality:** Keep your delivery natural and engaging.
- **Ensure Logical Flow:** Maintain clear transitions between topics to avoid confusion
- **Keep It Concise:** Oral testimony should be direct, which makes it impactful; Submit additional details in writing
- **Understand Your Local Representative's Stance:** Align your testimony with or challenge local elected leadership's position
- **Use Quotes:** Sparingly emphasize key points, referencing credible figures when applicable.

Professional Presentation

- **Dress appropriately** to reflect the formal nature of the hearing.

Is there a live audience? That depends on the organizer. Witness testimony and moderated discussion is the main event, but the moderator may engage as desired with an audience afterward (submitting follow up questions on note cards, a travelling microphone, engaging with an online chat) Organizers should make sure the witnesses and the audience know what the participation rules are.