

DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION

Through Community Action

Witness Preparation Guidelines for a Civil Society Field Hearing

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

Hearings provide a platform for public engagement, particularly for individuals and organizations directly affected by proposed policies. Choose witnesses for their expertise and ability to represent specific constituencies, industries, or concerns. Here are the main framing questions:

- (for an impacted community member)
How have presidential actions impacted you and your community?
- (for a legal expert)
What are checks and balances? How have the president's actions impacted the Constitution and our legal system?

Witnesses should prepare written testimony of 500-1000 words. (1-4 pages)

At the top of the document, please include:

- Witness name,
- 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

Each witness should plan to speak for 5-7 minutes. They should give a copy of their testimony to the moderator who will then submit it to a Civic Voice archive, maintained by the Impact Project. [LINK](#) (See the Recording and Submitting appendix document)

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

A live audience is welcome. Witness testimony and moderated discussion is the main event, but the moderator may engage as desired with the audience afterward.

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Key Focus Areas:

- **Impact on Constituents:** Lawmakers prioritize testimony directly related to their work and constituents.
- **Local impacts of Key Figures:** Address how actions by an executive overreaching affect the community and representative policy making.

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.

Structuring Your Seven-Minute Testimony

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