



Democracy in Action: A Field Guide to Civic Voice

Please find detailed Civil Society Field Hearing instructions at ConstitutionalDefense.us

Why Now?

Congress is the world's most powerful representative body, but it often fails to uphold checks and balances among the three branches of the US Government. Citizens don't need to wait—**we can lead**. By collecting and sharing **impact testimony**, communities create a public record that strengthens accountability and informs future lawmaking.

Step 1: Gather Impact Testimony

Invite local public witnesses to deliberate about local impacts of policy decisions or law. This deliberation can occur before action is taken, during the course of lawmaking or after a policy is in place, in order to provide feedback and accountability. Witnesses can provide:

1. **Personal story:** How has this impacted you, your family and your livelihood?
2. **Community Impact:** What happened? What has this policy meant for your broader community? For your region?
3. **Who is responsible** and who has the power to act or remedy this situation?
4. **Future Vision:** If we could shape a reform agenda, how should this policy be designed differently? What is an ideal outcome?

Step 2: Build a Civic Record

- Collect testimony in writing, also video, or audio to share more broadly.
- Make information independently verifiable, trustworthy and accessible.

- Store locally and share nationally by submitting the testimony to a local [data coop](#), the [Internet Archive](#) or the [Impact Project](#) to create a **living archive of civic voice**.

Step 3: Convene a Civil Society Field Hearing

Civil Society refers to the networks of groups, communities, and associations between individuals and government—clubs, non-profit organizations, task forces, and membership organizations. It exists nationwide. This guide shows how Civil Society can take the lead in holding elected representatives accountable and demonstrates how Congress can effectively check executive and judicial power. Modeled on Congress's official field hearings, these **community-led gatherings**:

- Document the real-world impact of presidential actions, policy and law
- Harness shared intelligence for democratic oversight.
- Demonstrate that civic voice is essential to checks and balances.

Why It Matters

- **After the Loper Bright (2023) Supreme Court ruling**, Congress must write clearer laws; citizen-generated records will guide statutory interpretation.
- **Revitalizing Democracy**: The U.S. House was designed to connect people to federal power—Civil Society Field Hearings update this vision.
- **Movement Building**: These hearings serve as both a **pro-democracy strategy** and a **tool of accountability** in times of crisis.

Civil Society Field Hearings show that democracy works best when **citizens are creators of the public record, not just spectators**.