



## Guidance for Witnesses at Congressional Hearings

### Overview:

A hearing is a formal meeting of a Senate, House, joint, or special committee of Congress, usually open to the public, that seeks to explore a specific topic or legislation or help the committee conduct an investigation or evaluate/oversee the activities of a government agency or the implementation of a federal law. Committees hold hearings to obtain information and opinions and to advance awareness of and build support on issues.

While each congressional committee has its own procedures, witnesses who are invited to testify at hearings must generally provide advance copies of their written testimony to the committee. At the outset of the hearing, after the committee chair and ranking member have made their opening statements, witnesses are typically allocated five minutes each to summarize their testimony. Committee members then take turns posing questions to the witnesses and making their own statements. After the hearing, committees will publish a transcript of the hearing that includes the full written remarks submitted by witnesses.

*The ERC Federal Team helps U of I System witnesses prepare for hearings by, for example, reviewing prepared remarks and providing background information on the committee and topics that may come up. We can also provide space to work in our Capitol Hill office, and escort witnesses to hearings.*

## **General Timeline:**

- 1 week before hearing
  - Witness to draft written and oral testimony
- 2-3 days before hearing
  - Witness to submit written testimony to the subcommittee
- Day of hearing
  - Witness to deliver oral testimony; respond to questions posed by subcommittee members
- Up to 14 days after the hearing
  - Witness to receive and respond to questions for the record (submitted by subcommittee members)

## **Additional Resources:**

Congressional Research Service - [House Committee Hearings: Witness Testimony](#)

Congressional Research Service - [Senate Committee Hearings: Witness Testimony](#)