

Guide to Texas Advocacy

LEGISLATURE v. LEGISLATOR: The body made up of the Texas House and Senate is referred to as the “Legislature.” A State Representative or Senator is referred to as a “legislator.”

REPRESENTATIVE v. CONGRESSMAN: A “Representative” is a member of the state House of Representatives. A Congressman refers only to federal lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives.

CAPITAL v. CAPITOL: Capital with an “a” refers to a city; capitol with an “o” refers to a building.

ADVOCACY v. LOBBYING: Advocacy involves educating a lawmaker on a subject. Lobbying involves a direct ask of a lawmaker (ex: vote for bill xyz). Any money spent on a lawmaker or his/her office also is considered lobbying. All lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying.

TESTIFYING

REGISTER: If you plan to testify at a hearing and are not an invited witness (the committee has specifically asked you to be there and included you on the agenda), you must register prior to speaking. In most cases, registration is completed on a computer located in the hallway outside the committee room. In some cases, committees still utilize cards that you must acquire from the committee clerk and submit inside the committee room. If you do not see the committee you are looking for on the computer screen outside the room, then cards likely are being used and you must enter the committee room and request one. Please note that there are separate House and Senate computers, so you will want to make sure you are using the computers located closest to the room where the committee is meeting.

INTRODUCTION: When testifying, always begin by introducing yourself and who you are representing. If you are testifying on a specific bill, state whether you are testifying “for,” “against” or “on” the bill. “On the bill” means that you are not asking the lawmaker to vote yes or no, simply providing more information on the issue being discussed.

SHOW RESPECT: Always be respectful. Use the terms “Representative,” “Senator” or “Chairman” when addressing a lawmaker. Do not use the lawmaker’s first name. If a Representative or Senator chairs a committee, always refer to him/her as “Chairman” or “Madame Chair.”

QUESTIONS: A witness does not ask questions of lawmakers when testifying. Lawmakers may ask witnesses questions at any point during their testimony.

If you do not know the answer to a question, simply tell the lawmaker that you will get back to them. Then make sure to follow up with his/her office in a timely manner. Do not attempt to answer a question that you are not sure about.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY: You also may wish to submit written testimony. Make at least 20 copies and submit to the clerk. You may or may not be able to submit written testimony only, so be prepared to speak, even if briefly.

NOTE: No campaign-related activities can take place at the Capitol. Please do not ask campaign-related questions or make a donation while at the Capitol. Instead contact the lawmaker’s campaign staff.