

**JANUARY 26, 2021**

# Testifying at your State Legislature

*Presented by: Dylan Vargas, Maddie Schumacher, and Priya Pandey*

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# Agenda

Join us for an advocacy  
adventure!

- Housekeeping, community norms
- Introducing the presenters
- How to Prepare for Testimony
- How to Give Testimony
- Following up on Testimony
- Questions

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# Housekeeping

- All trainings will be recorded to keep accurate notes to share with attendees and others after the call.
- If you are not speaking, please mute yourself to minimize sound issues.
- Make sure you identify yourself (name, League, State & pronouns) when asking questions
- **Staff will be monitoring the chat box.** If you have any questions or thoughts throughout the call, please feel free to drop them in the chat box.

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# Community Norms



Bring your full self and limit distractions



Use the chat box to add thoughts, experiences, and/or questions



What is learned here, leaves here



No one knows everything, together we know a lot



Don't yuck my yum



Oops, ouch, and educate



Assume best intentions

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# Presenting...

## the LWVUS Legislative Team!



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Image from: legislature.ky.gov

# Why should you Testify?

- To elevate community stories and issues
- Ensure that Legislators are considering all possible impacts of the bill
- Pressure your representative
- Promote your organization's advocacy work

# Steps to take to prepare to give testimony

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- Attend/Watch a public hearing of the committee that you wish to present in front of
- Read the bill to ensure you are as informed as possible
- Sign up for notices about the bill you are testifying around
- Connect with other speakers testifying



# Things to consider when drafting your Testimony



- Keep it short: Between 3-5 minutes
- Often you can draft a longer written statement
- Focus on what you know best: Your Personal Story
- Stay within your expertise
- Draft a notecard with important detail/points

Image from: [courant.com](https://www.courant.com)





# Structure of your Testimony

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- Introduction
- Clearly present your position
- Talk about why you've taken this position
- Recommend a specific action
- Thank the committee

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# Delivering your Testimony

## Testimony Delivery: What you need to know

- Nail down your audience
- Understand the issue at hand
- Be familiar with the committee process
- Apply a DEI Lens



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# Best Practices for Delivering Testimony

- Remember to observe all legislative guidelines and procedures.
- Arrive early to get a seat. Legibly print your name on the speaker registration sheet.
- Many bills may be heard that day and often are not presented in the order they appear on legislative calendars. Be patient and remain close by for when your name is called or join the line of people waiting for their turn to speak on your bill.
- Be flexible, polite, and respectful.
- Avoid repeating points made by other speakers. If all the points you wanted to make have been made, tell the committee you agree with the testimony given by the preceding speakers and urge them to take the appropriate action.
- Address your remarks only to the committee or task force.
- If asked questions, answer truthfully and factually.

# Tips for Virtual Testimony



Understand the virtual platform being used: Know when to unmute your microphone, and turn your camera on and off.



Follow Committee procedure: make sure you do a virtual sign in!



Be clear and well paced when speaking; avoid using jargon or unclear terms



# A note on accessibility

- You have the right to reasonable public accommodation if you need it
- Most state legislatures have programs in place to make testimony a submission accessible for people with disabilities
- Contact your state capitol's ADA coordinator
- Examples of accomodation that can be made:
  - Assistive Listening Devices
  - Interpereters and Readers
  - Communication Access Realtime Translation (live captioning)
  - Documents in alternative formats

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# After your Testimony

# Follow up

Follow up with committee members via a phone call or thank you note

Consider hosting a note-writing party with your League!

Note should be simple, direct, and acknowledge the time and energy legislators put into serving the public

*Dear [title and name]:*

*I attended the public hearing for [bill number and title] on [date] and submitted testimony to the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story [ex: about my daughter, Jack] in support of [bill title and number]. It means everything to know you will fairly consider my input on this important issue. [Add a sentence about why you want the law to pass or ask the committee to vote a certain way].*

*Sincerely, [name, address, phone number, email]*

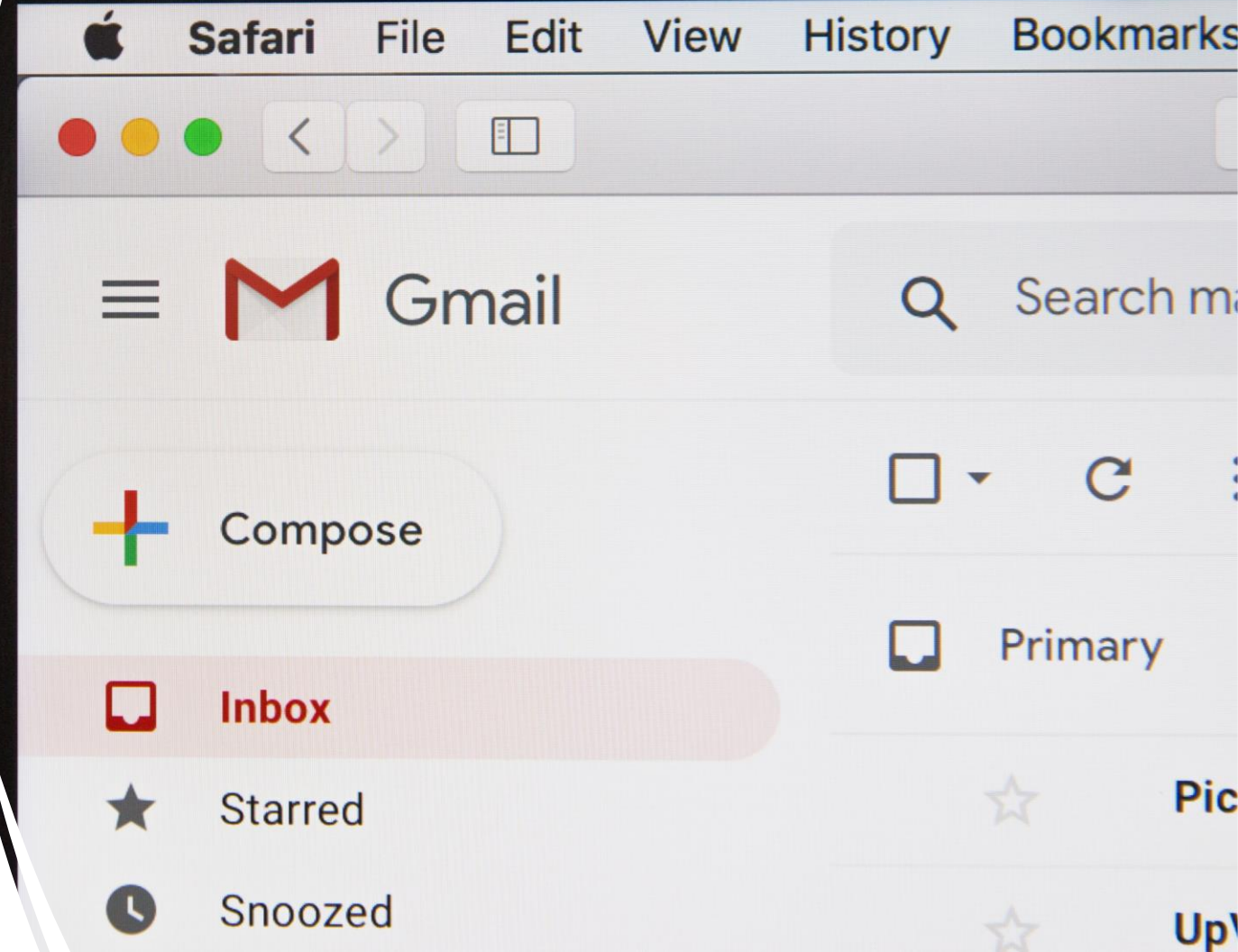


# Submit testimony

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- Submit written testimony if you haven't already!
- Either submit it via an online State Legislature portal or email it directly to the members of the committee.
- Most states ask that you submit your written testimony within 24 hours of the hearing.
- If you didn't share verbal testimony at the hearing, you can still submit written testimony afterwards!

Photo by [Stephen Phillips - Hostreviews.co.uk](https://www.hostreviews.co.uk) on [Unsplash](https://www.unsplash.com)



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# Questions?