



## Testifying at Budget Hearings

Before any votes are taken on the state budget, the Joint Finance Committee (the powerful budget-writing committee of the state legislature) holds a series of public hearings at locations around the state.

The Committee wants to hear from the public about issues that concern them. That makes these hearings a great chance for your board and leadership team to provide testimony highlighting the most important issues for your district.

### Prepare

- Notify the WASB if you plan to attend and testify at a hearing.
- If you have never been to a hearing before, it can be helpful to watch portions of past hearings on [Wisconsin Eye](#) to get a feel for how a public hearing operates.
- Even if your local legislator is not on the JFC, if a hearing is held in or near their districts, they will often attend and sometimes even fill in for JFC members.
- The [WASB State Budget webpage](#) includes resources on priority budget issues that can help for preparing testimony.

### Arrive Onsite

- To testify, you will need to fill out a registration slip. There will be signs and likely a line for registering if you arrive early.
- When you get to the front of the line, fill out your registration and submit it to the Capitol staff at the hearing.
- Once registered, be prepared to wait (perhaps for several hours) before you are called to testify. In typical years, these hearings attract hundreds of people who wish to speak. Bring work or something else to do while you wait or just sit back and listen to the testimony.
- People are called to testify in the order they register. In general, the earlier you can get to the hearing site and register, the earlier you will be able to speak.

### Testifying

- Because these hearings draw a crowd, a strict time limit (approx. 2 min) will be imposed on individuals testifying. Those testifying as part of a group of three or more are generally given more time (approx. 5 min).
- If you are able to bring a group and earn more time, you can have one person do all the talking or split it up between members of the group.
- When you are called to testify, **briefly** thank the committee for the opportunity to testify and identify yourself and your school district. Keep your comments brief and to the point. Be prepared to lead with your most important issue and provide local examples.
- A written copy of your testimony can explain your points in greater detail or cover additional points. Written testimony can be submitted to: [budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov) and all emails will be circulated to the full committee.

***Finally, feel a great sense of accomplishment for having participated in your state government as an advocate for the students you serve. Well done!***