

FAQS ABOUT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

With a few exceptions, all legislative bills must receive a public hearing by a committee of senators. The hearing decides whether a legislative bill will move forward in the process of becoming a law. Here are some frequently asked questions that might help you prepare if you are considering attending a hearing to observe or to testify.



Preparing for the Hearing

When and where are hearings for a bill scheduled?

You can find information about a bill you are interested in, which committee it is assigned to, and when the hearing is set for on the Nebraska Legislature's website. Organizations that support or oppose bills follow them closely and often provide updates about each bill they are watching. To get updates from these organizations, sign up for their listservs listed in the "Support Resources" Appendix of *Survivors Speak*.

How and when should I get to the Capitol Building?

The Capitol Building is located at 1445 K St, Lincoln NE 68508. Committees generally hear multiple bills on the same day, beginning at 1:30pm unless otherwise posted. You can find information on where to park and how the Capitol building is laid out on the Nebraska Legislature's website.

What should I wear?

It is a good idea to dress in layers – the building is older and can be very warm or very cold in the building. Though most will be dressed in business or professional wear, you can decide what you are comfortable wearing.

What should I bring with me?

If you go to the hearing for the purpose of testifying and you wrote your testimony out, you will want to bring 12-15 copies of your written testimony. Whether you intend to testify or not, you may also want to bring a pen, a notebook, a snack and something to drink. You might be in the hearing room for a long time.



Attending the Hearing

How do I get to the hearing room?

Each committee is assigned a different hearing room, and some may be on different floors. When you walk into the Capitol on the first floor, go straight forward all the way to the center of the building where you will see the information desk. Usually someone is at the desk to help, but even if the desk is unattended there is a map of the building on the desk that will help you find the hearing room.

What should I look for in the hearing room?

Inside the room there will be a small table that has a sign-in sheet and testifier sheets. If you intend to testify, sign in on the big sheet, and then fill out a testifier sheet for each bill you're testifying on. The testifier sheet is a smaller, sometimes colorful sheet that you fill out and give to the clerk when you go up to testify. If you do not intend to testify, you do not have to sign in.

There will be a row of tables and chairs at the very front of the room – this is where the senators sit. In front of the senators' tables there will be a table with a single chair facing the senators. This is the table where testifiers sit when they give their verbal testimony. If you are planning to testify, you will want to note the rows of chairs nearest to the testifier table, when the bill you plan to testify on is called, you may want to move to that row so you can get to the table quickly when it is your turn to speak.

Is everything recorded during hearings?

The hearings are recorded and broadcasted on NET and you will be on Nebraska Public Television if you testify. There will also be a recording device and indicator lights on the testifier table, so that testimony can be recorded and transcribed word for word. Though the livestream video is not available after the hearing, media may have cameras in the room, and audio recordings are transcribed, part of public records, and available indefinitely.

What are the senators doing during hearings?

Senators on the committee may be doing several things while listening to testifiers, and sometimes they may even leave the room for a while. While they try to be present for the whole day, senators often have other hearings in other committees to get to, meetings to attend, and some may even have to go to work. A senator not looking at a testifier doesn't mean they aren't paying attention. In fact, many times they are researching things that testifiers said or pulling up information on the bill that is being heard.

What if I am not going to testify?

If you are there to listen, observe, or support someone else, you may still have a long wait ahead of you. It can be helpful to find a seat where you feel the most comfortable, where you are able to see and hear what you are there to see and hear. You may listen to many people give testimony on bills, and sometimes what they say can bring up a lot of emotions. If you need suggestions on things to do while waiting, check out "Tips for Testifying in Person" in *Survivors Speak*.

Resources

- Search for a Bill: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/>
- List of Committees: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/committees.php>
- Parking and Maps of the Capitol: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/feature/visiting-capitol.php>
- Search for a Hearing: https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php
- Hearing Livestream: <http://netnebraska.org/basic-page/television/live-demand-state-government>

"FAQs about Committee Hearings" is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.