



KEYS TO EFFECTIVE CITIZEN ADVOCACY

1. GOVERNMENT BELONGS TO THOSE WHO SHOW UP!

- a. Physical presence at the Capitol, City Council meetings, etc. is ideal.
- b. Elected officials are more likely to remember you and what you say if it happens right before their eyes!
- c. Accountability of elected officials is easier when you can see them in action and they know you're there (trust me, they recognize repeat visitors).
- d. Commitment to your cause shows through, and always stay until the end if possible.

2. BE PREPARED AND GET TO THE POINT!

- a. Have your comments and/or testimony prepared ahead of time.
 - i. Memorize a brief opening and closing.
- b. 3-5 minutes of comments/testimony is ideal.
 - i. Many committee chairs limit testimony to 3 minutes, especially if legislation draws a lot of attention, which ours often do.
- c. Have multiple copies (10-15) of your written testimony available, if possible.
 - i. Others can deliver it for you if you have an emergency.
 - ii. Some committees require at least 15 copies.
 - iii. Often legislators are absent, they can look at written testimony later (very common).

3. ARRIVE EARLY, STAY LATE

- a. Always arrive early, it can take up to 15 minutes just to fill out witness testimony cards, and last minute changes to schedule are very common.
- b. If your bill or others draw a crowd, you could have to wait all night for your turn to testify.
 - i. If you get there early, you can get to the "front of the line."
 - ii. Let Texas Values or the chairman know if you and others are arriving from out of town, they may be able to accommodate you and have you testify early.
- c. Floor debates can delay committee hearing start times ("2 p.m. or upon Adjournment").
- d. Staying until the end of committee hearing can be very fruitful.
 - i. Committee may vote on bill just after testimony (very exciting to see your bill pass in front of your own eyes!)
 - ii. Observe, take notes of others' testimony, legislator's questions and responses.
 1. Remember, bill must go through Senate and House.
 2. Help prepare you/others for debate on Floor or in the media.

4. USE THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE’S WEBSITE-IT’S FREE!

- a. Will send you email update and alerts on movement of your bills.
- b. Updated regularly, and some vote information is released in real time.
- c. Watch and listen to testimony while waiting your turn, or for review.
 - i. All committee hearings and floor debates are recorded and online live and for review.

5. CIVIC LESSONS 101- POLITICIANS LOVE CHILDREN & BABIES

- a. Bring you kids; they’ll have a lasting experience they won’t forget.
- b. Spend the day, before or after your testimony, visiting offices, asking them to co-author and/or pledge their support for your bill, target the fence-sitters.
 - i. Children and babies are always great at getting attention.
 - ii. Great way to start dialogue, and then focus on your issues.
- c. Every child I’ve seen testify receives the attention of all in the room.

6. DO CURRENT RESEARCH, KNOW THE SCORE, BRING A FRIEND

- a. Having timely, up to date research on your issue is vital; you will very likely be asked questions. If it is good, they will use it for floor debates and it will become a part of legislative history so make sure you’re right.
- b. Know who on the committee already supports your bill, watch for “softballs.”
- c. Know who is hostile to your bill, turn the tables on them, and ask them what they *would* agree to.
- d. Bring others with you, especially those with a personal stake in the outcome of the bill.
 - i. Legislators notice the “score”, how many testified for or against a bill.
 - ii. Split up different arguments of bill with others, shows the depth of positives, negatives of the bill.
 - iii. Having others helps brainstorm, inspire winning thoughts while in hearing.

7. RESPECT THE STAFF & FOLLOW UP

- a. Staffers are the eyes/ears for the Legislators; they provide guidance on all issues.
 - i. Spend time with them; act as if you are meeting with the legislator.
 - ii. Give them a short one pager of talking points.
 - iii. Let them know if you’re for/against a bill and that you are mobilizing others.
- b. Set up meeting with legislator beforehand; let them know you’re a constituent if so.
- c. Push to meet with legislator, but always be willing to meet with staffer.
- d. Follow up after your meeting to get an answer, for or against.

8. “MAY I WALK WITH YOU?/SURE, I’LL WAIT”

- a. Be willing to sit in an office to wait for a legislator to return.
 - i. Common return time-just before morning session, after lunch, just before committee.
 - ii. These are also great places to walk with them between meetings. (Keep it brief!)

Texas Values is a group dedicated to preserving and advancing a culture of family values in the state of Texas. For more information, please visit txvalues.org or email us at info@txvalues.org.