

The committee's role

It would be impossible for any legislator to be familiar with and understand each of the thousands of bills introduced during any given session.

Therefore, House committees act as filters on various subject matters deciding which bills should be heard or if they should be approved and then moved on through the process.

Committees hold public hearings on bills to put each proposal into its best form. During a hearing, the committee can take testimony from the bill sponsors, the public and experts in the areas the bill would affect.

The committee has several courses of action it can take:

- Amend the bill;
- Combine two or more bills under one file number;
- Recommend a bill be approved as introduced;
- Recommend it be approved as amended;
- Send it to another committee for consideration;
- Vote not to approve the bill; or
- Table it, which in essence delays action.

Even if a bill is voted down by a committee, it can be resurrected. For example, a bill defeated by a committee could be amended into another bill in another committee or on the House Floor.

Committee appointments

Committee chairs are appointed by the Speaker of the House. These positions are generally reserved for senior caucus members. Before session begins in the first year of the biennium, members of the speaker-designate's caucus request assignments to certain committees and the minority leader-elect submits to the speaker a list of desired committee appointments for his or her caucus members. The speaker then makes the appointments. Each House member generally serves on three or four committees.

If you want to testify at a committee hearing . . .

Accessing committee information

Committee hearings are open to the public. In addition, all committee hearings are taped.

Audio and video archives are available on the House website (www.house.mn.gov) for meetings back to 2003. For information on accessing audio tapes for earlier years, contact the Legislative Reference Library at 651-296-8338.

Video of House Floor sessions since 1998 is available on the House website.

Information about committee membership, agendas and schedules is available on the House website. There you can sign up to receive an email with all committee schedules or you can receive individual committee schedules by signing up for their listserv.

Contact the committee administrator

Each committee has an assigned committee administrator. It is best to contact that person at least a day or two before the hearing. Provide your name and organization affiliation, if any, tell them which bill/issue area you would like to comment on and indicate if you are for or against the proposed legislation. You should also ask how much time you will be allowed for testimony. Committee and administrator contact information can be found on the House website.

Arrive to the committee hearing early

Getting to the meeting early will give you a chance to meet the committee administrator, identify legislators and generally get comfortable in the room. Be sure to turn off your mobile device, as these devices can interfere with audio in the room.

When you testify

When you are asked to testify, you should be seated at the testifiers' table and begin by identifying yourself and the organization you represent, if any. Speak slowly and clearly into the microphone.

Speak through the chair

All questions and answers during committee hearings are routed through the committee chair. Address the chair as "Madam Chair" or "Mr. Chair."

Be brief

Make your key points as concise as possible. Most committee hearings are limited in time, and there are generally several bills on the agenda.

Be prepared to answer questions

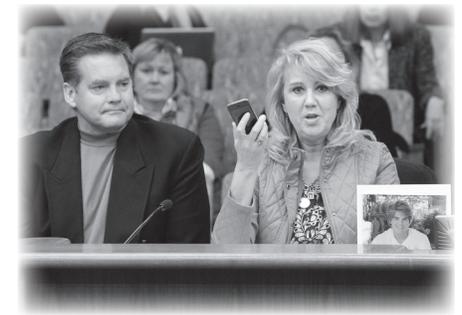
The best way to make your case is to provide straightforward answers to the legislators' questions. If you don't know the answer, just say so.

Show respect

Your views are important and you have a right to be treated courteously by all members and staff. Likewise, legislators are more apt to respond to polite treatment than to browbeating. There are meritorious sides to every issue. Understand the difficult position legislators have in reaching their decisions.

Provide written summaries

A concise and clearly written letter or summary can be an effective way to help legislators understand your point of view. Notify the committee administrator beforehand of any handouts you would like to provide.



Committees

At the center of the legislative process

2023-24 House Committees and Divisions

Agriculture Finance and Policy
Capital Investment
Children and Families Finance and Policy
Climate and Energy Finance and Policy
Commerce Finance and Policy
Economic Development Finance and Policy
Education Finance
Education Policy
Elections Finance and Policy
Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy
Ethics
Health Finance and Policy
Higher Education Finance and Policy
Housing Finance and Policy
Human Services Finance
Human Services Policy
Judiciary Finance and Civil Law
Labor and Industry Finance and Policy
Legacy Finance
Public Safety Finance and Policy
Rules and Legislative Administration
State and Local Government Finance and Policy
Sustainable Infrastructure Policy
Taxes
• Property Tax Division
Transportation Finance and Policy
Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy
Ways and Means
Workforce Development Finance



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*Capitol Quotes

Quotes can be found painted on the walls throughout the Capitol building. Gathered by Elmer Garnsey, chief Capitol decorator, they are meant as inspiration to elected officials and citizens who pass through the state house.

The quote featured on the front of this brochure can be found in the House of Representatives Retiring Room.

It is from George Campbell (1719-1796), who was born in Scotland. As a minister, theologian and professor of divinity, he became a philosopher of rhetoric and is remembered for his work, "A Dissertation of Miracles."

Capitol Quotes*

*"Free and fair discussion
will ever be found the
firmest friend of truth."*

— George Campbell