



———— A CITIZEN’S GUIDE TO THE ———— 2021 WYOMING STATE LEGISLATURE

Here’s a run-down of what you should know about getting involved and taking action at the session this year, based on the unusual hybrid in-person and virtual approach. The good news is that, regardless of whether you’re at the Capitol or on your couch, you can be a voice for conservation in Wyoming by following these basic guidelines.

HOW TO TESTIFY ONLINE

Sign up to testify. [Committee meeting schedules](http://www.wyoleg.gov) are available on the legislature’s website (www.wyoleg.gov). To sign up, click the “Testify” button next to the scheduled meeting. The button will take you to a form to register for that specific committee and meeting date.

Get instructions from LSO. You’ll receive an email from the Legislative Service Office with information about how to join the meeting.

Prepare your testimony. Outdoor Council staff are always happy to offer advice if you aren’t sure where to start. More on this below!

Listen in. When the meeting starts, you can join using the link provided by the LSO. You’ll enter the meeting as a webinar attendee. It’s always good to show up early so that you are aware of the committee’s discussion prior to the public comment opportunity. When public comment is announced, you will have the option to indicate you wish to make a comment. And when it is your turn to speak, you will be able to turn your camera and audio on so that the committee can see and hear you. Make sure your Zoom profile displays your full name.

Be strategic with signups. If there’s a topic of interest to you that you may want to weigh in on, go ahead and sign up to testify. You can always decide not to comment.

TIPS FOR TESTIFYING

Get comfortable with the process. If you’re able, take the time to attend or listen to committee meetings before your bill is discussed to get a feel for the members and their priorities. Most importantly, sitting in on public testimony will help you feel more confident when it’s your turn to step up to the microphone.

It helps if you can bring something new to the table. Your case will be more compelling if you introduce a new perspective or find a new way to make a point instead of repeating comments that have already been made by others. Explain how you, or values important to you, will be impacted.

Have an elevator pitch. You might be asked to limit the length of your testimony if there are a large number of people waiting to speak. Be prepared to make your point in under three minutes.

It's OK to be nervous! Citizen speakers have far more clout with legislators than paid, professional lobbyists. These elected officials see the “hired guns” often, but authentic citizen voices can be rare, so you'll get special attention. Remember, however, to always be respectful in your demeanor and comments.

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE EMAIL

Sending an email to your legislator only takes a minute or two and can be a meaningful way to connect. But make sure it's personal: If a group provides you with a pre-written form email, ignore it and write your own message.

During the interim, legislators may benefit from a detailed letter or email to help them understand your position on an issue. That's not the case during the session — there simply aren't enough hours in the day and legislators get hundreds of emails. To ensure your message gets read, keep it brief, straightforward, and respectful.

WE SUGGEST THIS THREE-SENTENCE FORMULA:

1. Introduce yourself and make a connection. (This is important to legislators who will read the first line and possibly discard the message if they think it's a form email.)
2. State the position you want them to take (i.e. to oppose or support the legislation) and provide the title or subject of the bill as well as the bill number.
3. Explain why. Cite your personal experience or values.

Example: *“Hi Rep. Jones, I live in Sheridan and recently installed solar panels on my shop. I'm writing to ask you to please vote no on SF 16, the net metering bill. This bill would unfairly raise my utility costs and punish hard-working people like me who have invested in rooftop solar.”*