

HOW TO PREPARE FOR JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE (JFC) HEARINGS

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) holds 5 – 6 hearings around the state after the budget is released from the Governor. It's critical that the 16 members of JFC hear, repeatedly, about the tobacco control program. If they don't hear about the program, in their minds it doesn't exist. If they hear little, it only exists a little or is only important to a couple of people. Tobacco as an issue regularly makes headlines in the paper. If we don't show up in force, legislators won't believe that our work is as critical as it is.

Actions in order of priority

- 1 - Attendance at hearing & presenting verbal testimony
- 2 - Attendance at hearing & registered as either a supporter (if you are on your own time) or an educator (if you are on work time)
- 3 - Written testimony hand delivered at Hearing
- 4 – Written testimony mailed/emailed to JFC members

What to prepare in advance

- Identify people who can attend – dates, times and locations are given with little notice, but typically occur in March
- Your testimony
 - Your testimony is **your story** – it is important, especially if you are testifying in your district to let your elected representative know why tobacco prevention, preservation of the program, etc. is important to constituents. Part of your story can be how tobacco use impacts people who live in your county, health care costs, lives lost, etc. But when possible, bring in a personal aspect (“Darcy” quit while pregnant) in order to cut through the numbers and make it real. Paint a picture.
 - Should be SHORT – **no more than 3-4 minutes** – you will be cut off if you go over time.
 - Should be clear. **State your message at the beginning and the end of your testimony (your story).**
 - Should be heartfelt. **Make your legislators FEEL** the importance of your message.
 - If you are submitting written testimony (your story), be sure you have arranged for its delivery to the Hearing.
- Make (and bring with you) 20 copies of your testimony (for BOTH written or oral testimony) – 16 for JFC members, 4 for Committee staff
- Call the facility ahead of time to find out parking options & allow extra time for parking
- A camera to take photos of your constituency at the Hearing for you to submit to the local media when you return
- Transportation, meals, childcare – Cover all of your bases BEFORE the Hearing, so you don't find yourself having to leave before being called to testify. Plan for a LONG day.
- Connect and coordinate with your colleagues – both local and state to talk through who is coming and what different aspects of the program can be highlighted.

What to expect at the Hearing

- The **earlier you arrive, the earlier you will be called to testify**. If you have to leave the Hearing before the end, arrive about 2 hours early to sign in to speak.
- You will have to **sign in** when you arrive
 - You will **indicate if you intend to give verbal testimony**
 - You will also indicate your **purpose** for attending the hearing
 - As a public employee, your purpose is ALWAYS “education” or “information”; NEVER identify yourself as a “supporter”.
 - If you are representing yourself (not on work time; not using work materials), you are free to express support as well as to educate.
 - Give any written testimony you may be hand-delivering for someone else to the designated official at sign-in
- The media will arrive early – near the beginning of the Hearings. Make every effort to be there in large numbers when media are present.
- **The day will be LONG**. Plan accordingly for meals and snacks. Bring work, reading, friends and family to keep yourself occupied while you wait for your turn to testify. In the past, people have had to wait 6-8 hours before being called to testify.
- **Answering Questions** - Sometimes lawmakers will ask someone who testifies questions. It is best to **be prepared for both friendly questions and tricky questions**. They may range from questions about the program’s impact to how specific activities are funded. Don’t feel that you must respond immediately – if you don’t know, tell them you will follow up with them. If you are asked questions, the media may come and ask you some as well.

Support available to you

- SFW & state partners (ACS, AHA, ALA) will be available before, during, and after the Hearings to help you write, hone, and practice your testimony (your story).
- Visit www.smokefreewi.org & www.tobwis.org for support documents, data, talking points, etc. to assist in writing your testimony (your story) AND in the event that you are asked for a media interview.