

TheCapitol.Net's Executive Conference:
Preparing and Delivering Congressional Testimony

Presented for (federal agency)

(Agenda from a custom program presented every year since 1999. To tailor this program for your organization, call us.)
Washington, DC Wednesday, _____, 2002

Day One: Wednesday

8:30 Welcome and Introduction

Course facilitator, TheCapitol.Net

8:35 Committee Action and the Hearing Environment

Congressional expert

This session will set the context of congressional hearings by briefly reviewing the role of committees and the hearing process in the work of Congress. The speaker will review the types of committees and subcommittees; types of committee hearings (legislative, investigative, oversight, confirmation); committee markup of legislation; and committee reports. The use of closed hearings and briefings will be addressed. This session will also examine the role of the committee chairman in hearings; the role that committee staff play in deciding the hearing subject matter, in selecting witnesses, and in preparing questions to ask witnesses.

9:40 Break

9:50 Testimony Preparation

Congressional testimony expert

The speaker will discuss all aspects of testimony preparation, including research preparation, audience analysis, and the process of persuasion. Components of writing a sound argument will be presented in detail including position, reasons, support and explanation. Interactive group exercises will be used to demonstrate sound arguments.

11:15 Break

11:30 Drafting and Delivering Effective Testimony

Congressional testimony expert

The speaker will review a "testimony worksheet" with participants and walk them through important techniques for organizing the written testimony in a way that improves its oral delivery. Videotapes of actual congressional hearings will be shown to illustrate effective organizational techniques employed in a testimony opening statement.

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Day One continued: Wednesday

12:15 Lunch

1:15 Question and Answer Techniques

Congressional testimony expert

The speaker will discuss witness/member of Congress dynamics and the "art" of responding to questions. The importance of preparing written "Q-and-A modules" for possible questions will be presented. Participants will view videotapes of actual congressional hearings and will critique the hearing witnesses' formal presentations/reading of testimony as well as their responses/reactions during the question-and-answer session.

2:00 Break

2:15 What Makes Effective Testimony: The Staff Perspective

Congressional staffers

Staffers from congressional committees will discuss the work of their committees, briefly outlining the organization, procedures and personnel. They will then present how their committees prepare for hearings, the differences between authorization and appropriation hearings, and the relationship between their committees and the executive branch. Finally, they will discuss what staff and members of Congress believe makes effective testimony, and provide suggestions for preparing for congressional hearings.

3:15 Instructions for Preparing for Simulated Hearing Exercise

Course facilitator, TheCapitol.Net

On Day 1, the participants will be given background information on an issue and assigned a position (pro/con) to take on the issue. Each "witness" will then prepare a 3-minute statement on that issue which he/she will present on Day 2 during a simulated congressional hearing (see Day 2 agenda).

3:30 Conclusion of Day One

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Day Two: Friday
Simulated Congressional Hearing

On Day 2, witnesses will testify in panels of two before a mock congressional committee, each presenting his/her 3-minute statement. After their formal presentations, the two witnesses will answer questions from the committee for eight minutes. Each witness will be videotaped and a critique session, which includes viewing of the videotapes, will follow the hearing exercise.

Several (agency client) participants will have an opportunity to play the role of a member of Congress during part of the simulation. Volunteers will be selected to play the third "member" of the committee (several volunteers will take turns in this position).

8:30 Simulated Hearing Exercise: Hand-in Prepared Testimony to Committee Clerk

8:35 Commence Simulated Hearing
(Breaks will be taken as needed)
Congressional expert, Hill staffer, and (client agency volunteer)

1:00 Lunch

2:00 Review and Critique Session
Congressional testimony expert

4:00 Complete Evaluation and Conference Concludes

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