



WASHINGTON STATE
WOMEN'S COMMISSION

2024

LEGISLATIVE SESSION GUIDE

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Our Motivation

Our Mission

The mission of the Women’s Commission is to improve the life of every woman and girl by ensuring equitable opportunities and removing systemic barriers through engagement, advocacy, and public policy, while being inclusive of diverse populations.

Our Mandate

According to our authorizing legislation, the Women’s Commission’s work, including in the legislative space, should “address the reality that women face unique problems and needs...(and) shall address issues relevant to the problems and needs of women”.

Our Vision

Every woman and girl is healthy, safe, prosperous, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

Our Areas of Focus

The Women's Commission has four areas of focus, each of which has a corresponding subcommittee. Each corresponding committee has committed to focusing its efforts on several specific issues.

Health

- Access to reproductive care services
- Maternal Health Outcomes
- Mental & Behavioral Health Access
- Emergency preparedness and how it related to healthcare disparities

Safety

- Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault
- Technology Safety
- Gun Violence

Economics

- Care Sector Access and Affordability
- Pay & Advancement Equity, including Women on Corporate Boards
- Workplace safety
- Affordable Education
- Economic Impact of Climate Change

Our Method

Limited Scope

To maximize our impact, the Commission's subject matter committees will:

- Focus on 3-4 legislative issues as **KEY** issues. This will include collaborating with other stakeholders & bill sponsors on how best to support, providing in person or written testimony, communications dedicated to encouraging stakeholders & community members to testify or sign in, in consultation with the Executive Director and Legislative Affairs staff lead. This year's key issues are outlined in the Women's Commission Policy Agenda.
- In addition, we will seek to **SUPPORT** other stakeholders in their leadership of emergent legislative issues in each of our three issue areas. Limited staff time will be available for these issues.

Legislative Outreach

Why is it Important to Meet with Your Legislators?

Washington State Legislators are citizen legislators, which means that many of them have jobs outside of the legislature and are just regular people with limited experience.

Legislators are **not experts** in all things and depend on people like yourself to inform them. Even though you might not agree with them on all things, they are also trying to do the best they can.

Leaving doors open for future discussions is vital.

You may ask – Why You?

You are an ambassador, representing women not only in your legislative district, but the state in general. You were selected to be on the Commission or committee member because of your unique expertise, advocacy, and passion. As a leader in your community - and the state you are an asset to legislators because you represent a key group of their constituents. In the best of all worlds, legislators may begin to reach out to you for your advice!

What is the biggest mistake you can make?

Believing you can't make a difference!

Never underestimate the your ability to change the world.

Important points to remember!

- When serving as a commissioner or committee member, you are a representative of the Women's Commission and the Office of the Governor.
- No one is to take unilateral action on any bill or agree to any terms on behalf of the Women's Commission without expressed direction from WSWC staff.
- If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, state that you will follow up with an answer. Make Legislative Staff Lead and your Chair(s) aware of the question, so they can help you respond with accurate information.

How to Schedule a Meeting with Your Legislators

Steps for Setting up a Legislative Meeting

- [Click this link to locate your specific state legislators.](#)
 - Note: You have 2 Representatives in the House and 1 Senator.
- Email or call to request a meeting with your legislator before the legislative session starts.
 - Specify you would like to meet with them “In District”.
- Identify yourself as a Commissioner or Committee member of the **Women’s Commission and a constituent** who would like to introduce yourself to them and share the focus areas of the Women’s Commission.
 - You will be provided a briefing paper and Staff will be available to coach and/or attend when possible.

Meeting Request Email Template

Commissioners

Subject: [Request for In-District meeting] Women’s Commission Focus Areas

Dear *[Your Senator/Representative]*

I serve as a Commissioner on the Washington State Women's Commission, appointed by Governor Inslee. As a constituent and WSWC commissioner, I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share the Women’s Commission’s focus areas.

Please let me know what dates and times you have available.

Thank you for your service,

[Your Signature]

Committee Member

Subject: [Request for In-District meeting] Women’s Commission Focus Areas

Dear *[Your Senator/Representative]*

My name is *[INSERT NAME]* and I am a constituent in your district. I also serve as a member of the Women’s Commission *[INSERT COMMITTEE]* Committee. In these capacities, I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share focus areas that the Women’s Commission’s *[INSERT COMMITTEE]* is focusing on.

Please let me know what dates and times you have available.

Thank you for your service,

[Your Signature]

Legislative Testimony Overview

"Open" Legislature

Washington State has one of the most open legislatures in the country. A bill has a public hearing before Senate and House committees before being considered on the floor of the House and Senate. For the 2023 session, House and Senate committees will meet using a format which allows for both in-person and remote participation. You have the opportunity to provide written testimony, state your position on a bill, or register to testify either in person or remotely by registering at [Committee Sign In](#). You may also contact your legislator to make your position on a bill known. You can do so by writing a letter, sending an email, calling the legislator's Olympia office, or by calling the Legislative Hotline - 800.562.6000.

Committee Hearings

Legislative hearings are conducted informally. The rules are somewhat relaxed but are intended to help preserve decorum and allow respectful, courteous debate. Anyone can testify; you do not need formal training.

How a Meeting Is Conducted

Be present at the beginning of the hearing. The committee chair will open the hearing on a particular bill. Frequently, opening comments will be made by the bill's sponsor and/or by committee staff. Sometimes, however, the Chair will ask for testimony from proponents and opponents immediately.

The Chair will organize the hearing to ensure:

1. committee members hear relevant information,
2. interested persons are given the opportunity to express their positions, and
3. the hearing does not exceed the time available.

Most committee hearings are limited to two hours and may have several matters pending. The Chair will attempt to be fair and provide each person an opportunity to testify. It may be necessary, however, to restrict testimony so that everyone is given an opportunity to express their opinions. You may not be called on to testify, however, you may still provide written testimony up to 24 hours after the start of the hearing.

Setting up Your Legislative Account

To sign in to testify in committee, submit written testimony, comment on a bill, or state a position without testifying you MUST have a Legislative Account. This account will be how you sign in the Committee Sign In interface.

[Instructions](#) on how to create your Legislative Account and edit your profile.

Testifying in Committee

Preparation for Hearing

You will need to sign into your Legislative Account (see above)

Before the Hearing

Prepare Your Remarks. Time is usually limited, so be brief and direct. *Written testimony should not be read at committee hearings.* Writing your comments in outline form will be helpful when you speak, and you should summarize your written testimony.

Avoid Duplication. If other people will be offering similar testimony at the hearing, try to coordinate your testimony and avoid duplication. Well organized testimony is the most effective.

At the Meeting

Testifiers can sign in electronically for all committees at [Committee Sign In](#), or at the kiosks located around the legislative campus. **The sign-in window closes one hour before the meeting is set to begin.**

- Regardless of whether you sign in to testify remotely or in person, you will receive an individualized link to join the meeting remotely. **Do not share your Zoom link for the meeting**, and only use as a backup if your plans change. For more detailed instructions on testifying remotely or in person, please visit [Committee Sign In](#).
- **Be punctual**; usually there is only one public hearing at which testimony is taken on a particular bill.
- Check to see if proposed amendments or substitute bills are available at the [Committee Schedules](#) page. Click view docs for the meeting you are interested in.
- **Maintain proper committee protocol**: wait to be acknowledged by the committee Chair before speaking; ensure testimony is respectful and professional; and follow rules for testimony established by the Chair (i.e., time restrictions)

Providing Testimony - In Person

- If you sign in to testify in person, only use your link to participate remotely as a backup if your circumstances change.
- Approach the testimony table when you are called on to testify. The microphones will already be turned on.

Providing Testimony - Remote

- Backgrounds that include a campaign sign, a slogan, or any other material that is campaign-related, offensive, or otherwise defamatory will not be permitted. Be aware that failure to follow the rules for testimony established by the Chair may result in forfeiting the opportunity to testify.
- See detailed instructions on how to join a [House](#) or [Senate](#) meeting once signed in.

Making Your Remarks

1. Begin by introducing yourself to the Chair and committee members and stating your purpose.

For example, *"Mr. or Madam Chair and members of the committee, I am Jane Smith from Spokane. I am here representing myself. I support this bill because . . ."*

2. In your opening remarks, make it clear whether you are representing other citizens or a separate group.
3. Be brief and be sure your remarks are clear. Avoid being too technical and do not repeat previously made remarks. You do not need to be nervous or worried about how you present your testimony.
4. Be prepared for questions and comments from committee members. These are designed to gain additional information, but **don't answer if you are not sure of the answer.**

Tell the members you will send a written answer to the committee, and then reach out to Leah & your committee chair(s) to be sure the additional information is gathered and sent.

5. Restrict yourself to your testimony. Abstain from other overt demonstrations such as clapping, cheering, booing, etc.

How to Register to Testify in a Committee Hearing

1. [Create a Legislative Account/ Sign into your Legislative Account](#)

See: "Setting up your Legislative Account" on page 9 for Instructions

2. Select Legislative Chamber (i.e., House, Senate, Joint)
3. Select the committee's name and meeting date and time, then select the bill for which you would like to testify.
4. **Testimony registration will close 1 hour before the start time of the hearing.** Anyone who does not register before this deadline will be unable to testify before the committee.
5. **To testify in person:** Select "I would like to testify in person during the hearing." Ensure your registration information is accurate. After submitting your registration, it may not be possible to make changes. It will be a part of the legislative record and used by TVW for online and television graphics.

Note: Despite registering to testify in person, you will automatically be sent a Zoom link for the meeting. Please plan to testify in person as you indicated upon registering, but you may use the link as a backup if your plans change.

6. **To testify remotely:** Select "I would like to testify remotely." Ensure your registration information is accurate. After submitting your registration, it may not be possible to make

changes. It will be a part of the legislative record and used by TVW for online and television graphics.

Additional Information about Testifying

- Registration opens when a bill is scheduled for public hearing. Registration closes one hour before the meeting is scheduled to begin.
- Every registrant will automatically receive a Zoom link to the meeting. Each link is unique to the registrant. Registrants are prohibited from sharing links.
 - Those who signed up to testify in person should plan to do so, and only use their link as backup.
- Remote participants may participate via Zoom or phone. See instructions above on how to connect to the meeting.
- **Be advised: Registering to testify does not guarantee you a chance to speak or speak at specific times. Time constraints, technical issues, changes to committee schedules, etc. could affect your ability to testify.**
- Remote participants will be connected to the Zoom Webinar meeting in attendee view until called to speak.
- The committee Chair may limit public testimony (for example, one minute per testifier) due to time constraints. Be prepared to testify at any point during the hearing. It is also possible you will not be recognized to testify.
- Maintain proper committee protocol, which includes waiting to be acknowledged by the committee Chair before speaking, ensuring testimony is respectful and professional, and following rules for testimony established by the Chair.
 - In person testifiers may not bring signs into the hearing rooms and must adhere to the occupancy guidelines assigned to hearing rooms.
 - Remote testifiers may include the name of their organization in the background of video feeds, but backgrounds that include a campaign sign, a slogan, or any other material that is campaign-related, offensive, or otherwise defamatory will not be permitted.
- **Committee and technical staff are unable to assist with any individual connection, Zoom link, or other technical issue you may experience. Please see instructions document for tips on how to address any common link or other technical issues.**
- **Anyone who fails to follow the rules for testimony established by the committee Chair forfeits their opportunity to testify.**

Submitting Written Testimony

If you are unable to attend a committee meeting or if you would like to supply additional information, you may use the following method for submitting written testimony:

In the House

You may submit [written testimony](#) up to 24 hours after the start of the hearing, or you may email your written testimony directly to all committee members. Be sure to include the bill number and your position on the bill.

In the Senate

You may submit [written testimony](#) up to 24 hours after the start of the hearing, or you may email your written testimony directly to committee members. Be sure to include the bill number and your position on the bill. Another option is to email your written testimony to committee staff, as an alternative or in addition to submitting testimony to committee members.

Your District's Legislators

Please refer to [How to comment on a bill](#) for instructions on submitting bill comments directly to members in your district.

[A list of Committee Chairs can be found here.](#)

How to Submit Written Testimony

1. Sign into your [Legislative Account](#).
2. Select the Legislative Chamber.
3. Select the committee's name and meeting date and time, then select the bill for which you would like to submit written testimony.
4. Select "I would like to Submit Written Testimony." **Written testimony will close 24 hours after the start time of the hearing.**
5. Provide your written comments in the form. Your comments will be made available to legislative members and staff of the committee and will be included in the legislative record for bill and meeting archival purposes but will not be used as part of testimony summary materials on the bill report.

Stating Your Position Without Testifying

This approach is taken to notate your position on a bill in the archived legislative record. You will indicate you support (Pro) or oppose (Con) the bill.

1. Sign into your [Legislative Account](#).
2. Select Legislative Chamber.
3. Select the committee and meeting date and time, then select the bill for which you would like to register.
4. Select “I would like my position noted for the legislative record.”
Registration will close 1 hour before the start time of the hearing.
5. Ensure your registration information is accurate. Your registered position will be made available to legislative members and staff of the committee and will be included in the legislative record for bill and meeting archival purposes but will not be used as part of testimony summary materials on the bill report.

Bill Tracking Reports

The Commission is tracking legislation as bills move through the legislative process. If you would like to see the bill tracking in real time, [create your account here](#).

Once you have created your account, notify staff so they can share the Women’s Commission Bill Tracker with your account. All they will need from you is the username of the account you created.

Steps for utilizing the bill tracker:

1. [Log into your account](#).
2. On the “Bill Info Detailed Legislative Reports” page, click “Selected Bill Tracking” in the right column.
3. On the page titled “Selected Bill Tracking” click on the username under “Other User’s Data”; this will take you to the list of bills the Commission is tracking.

Quick Links

- [Bill Tracking Sign In](#)
- [Capitol Campus map](#)
- [Capitol Campus Parking Information](#)
- [Committee Sign In](#)
- [Committee Member Rosters](#)
- [2024 Cut off Calendar](#) (Will be updated once the Legislature has approved the 2024 calendar)
- [Find Your Legislators](#)
- [Glossary of Legislative Terms](#)
- [Legislative Committee Meeting, Schedules & Documents](#)
- [Legislature Home Page](#)
- [Legislative Member Roster \(including Legislative Assistant Information\)](#)
- [TVW](#)