

NONPROFIT ADVOCACY: Levels of Nonprofit Advocacy in Washington State

Purpose: Across different levels of government, your organization’s data can help decision-makers make the right policy choices for your communities. Learn how to participate in city, county, and state level advocacy from legislative meetings to delivering a compelling testimony in front of lawmakers. Check out these emPower tools for additional advocacy support: [Nonprofit Advocacy Overview](#), [Using Data in Advocacy](#), and [Policy Basics for Nonprofits](#).

More emPower Tools
+ learn more about each topic
thecapacitycollective.org/resources

What is City Level Advocacy?



The Seattle City Council is responsible for approving the city’s budget and developing policies to promote the health and safety of its residents.

Legislation topics include: **access to affordable child care, funding for quality early learning opportunities, assessing family’s needs in the community, and many more!**

What is County Level Advocacy?



The Metropolitan King County Council oversees the most populous county in the state with over 2.25 million residents.

The Council sets policies, enacts laws, and adopts larger budgets that guide services that include: **facilitating public outreach and education campaigns, connecting families to federal benefits, launching new youth programs and more!**

What are the similarities?



- 9 council members
- 4-year term limits
- **Mayors are not** part of the councils.

To get involved you can track **meetings**, submit **public comment**, or **testify** about an issue!

Where Can I Offer Testimony?

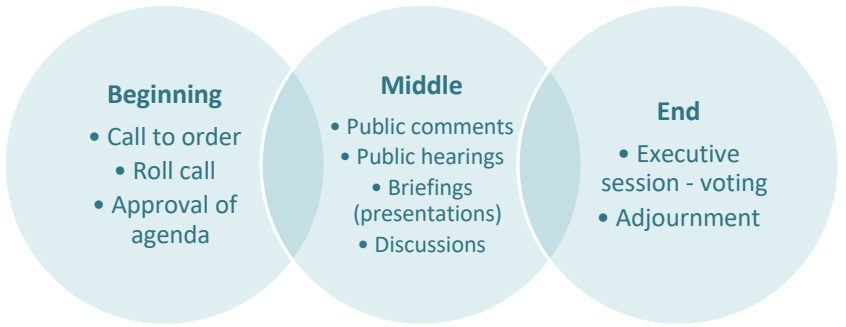
There are *three types of meetings* in front of council members (virtual or in person).

Public testimony is different at each. Often there will **not** be a vote on the issue the day testimony is heard.

Full Council	Committee	Public Hearing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technically not required to hear all of the public testimonies • Written testimonies are provided to the council members before or after 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testimony must be about the particular focus of the committee • Not all members of the council will be present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be part of an agenda or an entire meeting on its own • Dedicated to hearing as many perspectives from the public as possible

What Happens During a Council Meeting?

Most meetings will have an agenda that is available to the public online beforehand.



Tip: Delivering a Compelling Testimony

Keep these tips in mind when planning your written or verbal testimony before a committee or council.

-  **Introduce** yourself and state your position clearly at the start and end of your testimony
-  Try to connect a **personal experience** to the topic
-  Make an effort to **practice and edit** your testimony
-  Remember there is a time or word limit
-  **Thank** the council members for their time

Washington State Advocacy

The WA State legislature is responsible for:

- making new laws
- changing existing laws
- imposing taxes
- writing the state's budget
- regulating state agencies



It is made up of two chambers:

- **Senate** with 49 senators
- **House of Representatives** with 98 representatives

There are **49 legislative districts** in the state and each one elects: two representatives and one senator.

Each legislative session begins annually in January. In **odd-numbered years**, the state meets for **105 days** and the state budget is debated during this long session. In the **even-numbered years**, it meets for **60 days** for a short session.

How a Bill Becomes a Law – The Steps You Can Take Along the Way!

There are opportunities to support legislation at different points in its journey from idea to law.

Session timeline	What happens?	What can I do?
 Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with the community most affected and discuss potential solutions with legislators • If a legislator agrees to champion a bill, it is then written before session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule meetings with legislators in your district • Build relationships with legislators before the session and voting begins
 1st Chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bill is heard by a committee in either the House or the Senate • These committees may hold public hearings and listen to testimony • The floor debates the issue and votes on the bill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the progress of the bills you are following • Continue meetings with legislators to make sure they support bills that most help your community • Support testimonial efforts by organizing community members to testify
 2nd Chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it passed, the bill is heard by the other chamber (i.e. if the House heard the bill 1st then the Senate would hear the bill 2nd or vice versa) • After the floor debate, the bill is voted on again 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track bills to learn about relevant meetings • Follow up with legislators about issues that come up during debates • Support additional testimonies
 Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bill reaches the Governor's desk if both chambers pass the bill • The Governor can either sign the bill into law, veto the whole bill, or veto parts of the bill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with your legislators to ensure there are no problems • At the end of session, make sure to send a thank you to your legislators

Tip: A Great Legislative Meeting



Review these reminders for a successful meeting with your local legislator.

Make an appointment in advance

- Contact the **legislative assistant** to schedule the meeting
- Expect the meeting to be about **15 minutes**

Do your research

- Bring a **one pager** with information about your issue and the legislator
- Don't forget to **practice** beforehand!

Introduce & establish the relationship

- Prepare **roles** ahead of time (note taker, order of introductions etc.)
- If relevant, mention you live in the **legislator's district**

Keep the focus to one topic

- These meetings are supposed to be **very specific**
- Leave time for **discussion** between you and the legislator

Ask for a clear, specific request

- **Directly** ask if you have the legislator's support for the issue
- **Thank** them whatever their response

Follow up after the meeting

- **Thank** them again for their time
- **Re-send** information shared during the meeting