

WORKING DRAFT

Legislative Process Advisory Committee Issues October 19, 2004

I. Public Hearings

A. Sign up

1. Eliminate early, unofficial sign up sheets and waiting lines by eliminating same-day sign ups for hearings.
2. Allow electronic and telephone sign-up before the day of the hearing.
3. Have a separate sign-up sheet for each bill.
4. Post the official sign-up sheet two hours before the start of the hearing.
5. Prohibit one person from signing up for multiple people.

B. Order of bills

1. Take testimony on each bill separately.
2. Allot a specific time slot for each bill, which could vary depending on the complexity of, or public interest in, the issue.

C. Speaker order/time predictability

1. Use a lottery to determine order of speakers after all have signed up.
2. Limit time for testimony by each person so it is possible for the public to estimate when they might speak.
3. Allow groups favoring and opposing a particular bill to designate 2-3 speakers each and then give them a little extra time to speak.
4. Use a computer program to generate a random order list that is part of the public record and cannot be modified.

D. "First hour" issues

1. Have a uniform public official definition applicable to all committees.
2. Testimony by state officials, legislators and lobbyists
 - a. Take extensive testimony from officials at separate hearings.
 - b. Have agencies testify in the morning and the public after 11 AM.
 - c. Require lobbyists to testify after members of the public.
 - d. Schedule state agency head testimony for specific time slot during business hours.

- e. Allow agencies to call at least two days in advance to receive a time for the agency head to testify.
- f. Give each agency head a 10-minute instead of a 3-minute time limit on testimony.
- g. Limit each official's testimony to 5 minutes.
- h. Make time allotted to each official more uniform so one official does not consume the entire hour.
- i. When public officials' testimony exceeds one hour allow the officials to alternate with the public after that time as is currently done in some committees.
- j. Allow more than one hour for state officials when high profile issues are being heard.
- k. Have a set time to hear from constitutional officers, a set time for agency heads, and a set time for the public.
- l. Set a uniform policy among committees over how to have state officials testify when they cannot fit all agency testimony within the first hour.
- m. Structure the first hour so that adequate time is given to the agency head whose agency is most concerned with the topic of the hearing.
- n. Allow executive branch agencies to determine the order in which agencies will testify before the committee and allow committee leadership to accept this order.
- o. Extend the public official portion of hearings to 2 hours.
- p. Require legislators to submit questions to officials in writing with responses provided later.
- q. Hold special hearings for agency heads in the first two weeks of each session.
- r. LCO Recommendation #6.

E. Testimony

- 1. Receive official testimony by e-mail.
- 2. Scan in written testimony so it is available sooner.
 - a. Initially try a possible pilot program with small committee
- 3. Require state agencies to file testimony by e-mail. Allow others to do so.
- 4. Make clear that written testimony and multiple copies are not required in order to testify.
- 5. Encourage/incentivize/require a minimum number of legislators to be present for public testimony.
- 6. Require members to treat those testifying with courtesy.
- 7. Have evening hearings.

8. Limit end time of hearings so they do not go beyond certain time or late into the night.
9. Eliminate inconsistencies in how committees accommodate people with disabilities at public hearings.
10. Set time slots for people with disabilities and who don't speak English, so interpreters can be used efficiently.
11. Allow people representing nonprofit organizations more than 3 minutes to testify.
12. Encourage groups with very large numbers of people attending to consolidate testimony.
13. Allow advance sign-up by phone or e-mail and publish the sign-up list the day before the hearing.
14. When people sign up, give them a number and when calling people up to testify call them by number as well as name so others know where the committee is on the list.
15. Enforce the 3-minute time limit on all speakers.
16. Allow the public to testify first, before legislators, agency heads, and state and town officials.
17. For very large hearings, assign some committee members to talk informally with people in the hallways and personally receive testimony.
18. If many people are present and the hour is late, ask people who agree with a speaker to stand up, and keep a count of the number.
19. Ask legislators to hold meetings in town halls to receive testimony on particular issues and make that testimony part of the official hearing record in the appropriate committee.

II. Committees

A. *Number of committees*

1. Align committees more closely to state agencies so there are no overlaps or gaps in committee responsibilities.
2. Limit the number of committees.
3. Make the Housing Committee a standing, instead of a select, committee.
4. Reduce the number of committees and select committees.
5. When considering committee realignment or consolidation, use data on raised and committee bills only to indicate workload (LCO Recommendation #1).

B. *A & B designations and scheduling*

1. Reduce scheduling conflicts for meetings and hearings to enhance legislator and state agency participation.
2. Revisit A & B designations based on current workload.

C. *Size*

1. Limit the number of committee members to no more than the number of legislator seats in the committee's usual meeting room.

D. *JF deadlines*

1. Give each committee a different JF deadline date
2. Allow exceptions to A & B scheduling to accommodate individual JF deadlines.

E. *Chairman and ranking member training*

1. Ask caucuses to consider this issue.

F. *Staff training*

1. Provide additional staff training to ensure JF and other committee reports are filed properly.
2. Improve recordkeeping and documentation of agency testimony to make sure it is distributed to committee members, entered into the record, and included in JF Reports.
3. Make staff training mandatory.
4. Provide adequate training before the session starts.
5. Provide training during the session for newly appointed clerks.
6. LCO Recommendation #3.

G. *Minutes*

1. Require committee clerks to post meeting minutes within a specified time after the meeting.
2. Make committee minutes format more uniform among committees.

H. *Meeting locations*

1. Require all committee meetings to be held in designated meeting rooms, not in lobbies.

III. Floor Procedure

A. *Senate technical sessions*

B. *Late night sessions*

1. Chambers should not hold sessions after midnight
2. End sessions by 9 p.m.
3. Eliminate all weekend sessions.
4. Prohibit sessions between 12 AM and 10 AM without the consent of a majority of members present and voting.
5. LCO Recommendation #12.

IV. Bills and Amendments

- A. Carry bills over from long session to following session.
- B. Sponsor sheet for amendments - LCO Recommendation # 14.

V. Budget Process

- A. Program Review Committee recommendations.
- B. Eliminate current sunset laws and instead require periodic reports from the Program Review Committee on the qualitative and quantitative effectiveness and efficiency of every major state expenditure that has been ongoing for 5 years or more.

VI. Public Hearing Options to Be Considered by Chairs

- A. Take simultaneous testimony in various rooms in the LOB.
- B. Take testimony both in person at the LOB and by video from locations outside the LOB.
- C. Group agendas by subject.

VII. Other Issues Regarding Access & Physical Plant

A. *Legislative Website*

1. Add a “frequently asked questions” (FAQ) section (possible interactive feature with LWV answering questions). Consult LWV on the FAQs to list.
2. Create alternate Spanish and other language web pages.
3. Make the web page more accessible to blind and visually impaired people.
4. Add a Visitor Information page.
5. Add an alternative basic search page to the existing Internet search page.
6. Add a bulletin summary.
7. Add one-click link for each committee to allow someone to e-mail all of a committee’s members at once.

B. *Parking*

1. Remove state agency vehicles currently parking in the LOB garage.
2. Take control of empty lot at corner of Broad St. and Capitol Ave.
3. Explore whether legislature can take over lot at Capitol Ave. and Oak St.
4. When LOB garage is full, post signs directing people to other free and paid lots. Post parking rates at paid lots.
5. Post directions to the Forest Street Lot.
6. Explore the possibility of running a parking lot shuttle bus for the legislative session.

C. *Handicapped accessibility*

1. Get input from disability community to identify special physical or other challenges that can be addressed.
2. Install enhanced listening systems in all committee rooms.
3. Improve lighting in LOB and Capitol. Currently, it is too dark.
4. Keep the cafeteria open when hearings run late or provide vending machines with sandwiches and coffee.

D. *Indoor Air Quality*

1. Move ashtrays from close to outside doors of Capitol and LOB to avoid triggering adverse reactions as people enter.
2. Post signs to remind people not to wear heavy perfume in LOB and Capitol.

E. *Signs in Capitol and LOB*

1. Have signs in different languages.
2. Have more directional signs.
3. Post prominent signs for hearing rooms and committees.

F. *CTN*

1. Use closed captioning on CTN.
2. Encourage committee chairs and staff to remind people talking in committee hearings and meetings to turn on microphones.

G. *Real-time access in House and Senate lobbies to what is happening in chambers*

1. Institute radio broadcasts of proceedings similar to DOT highway information.
2. Place TV monitors in House and Senate lobbies.
3. Place electronic boards in House and Senate lobbies to show the same information as is shown on the top of the voting boards.