



**Congressional
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Senate Committee Hearings: Preparation

name redacted

Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process

March 16, 2015

Congressional Research Service

7-....

www.crs.gov

98-489

Committee hearings allow Senators an opportunity to gather information on—and draw attention to—legislation and issues within a committee’s purview, conduct oversight of programs or agencies, and investigate allegations of wrongdoing.

This checklist identifies, primarily for staff, many of the tasks that need to be performed by a full committee and, in most cases, subcommittees in advance of a hearing.¹ Some of the tasks are required by Senate or committee rules; others are common committee practice. Some tasks are usually the responsibility of the committee’s majority staff, some are shared by majority and minority staff, and some are performed by a Senator’s personal office staff.

Preliminary Decisions²

- Prepare a memorandum for the chair (and perhaps for other committee Members) outlining the need for and scope of the hearing, the expected outcome (hearing only, committee print, preparation of legislation), possible witnesses, number of hearing days anticipated, and political considerations.
- Obtain the chair’s approval to hold the hearing.
- Check the schedule of the chair and ranking minority Member, determine availability of and reserve committee hearing room, set date, arrange for an official reporter and make other arrangements for any electronic recording of the hearing, and confirm availability of essential witnesses.
- Send notification to all committee Members and staff of the date, time, and subject of the hearing at least one week in advance of the hearing.
- Several days prior to the hearing, brief committee Members and staff and send them a memorandum confirming date, time, location, and topic.
- The day before the hearing, call Senators to determine expected attendance and ascertain that a quorum (in most committees, a single Senator) will be present to hear testimony. Check for possible conflicts between hearing times and Senate floor schedule. (Senate Rule XXVI, paragraph 5, generally prohibits committee meetings—except Appropriations and Budget meetings—after the Senate has been in session for two hours, or after 2:00 p.m. when the Senate is in session; this rule is typically waived by unanimous consent on the floor.) Anticipate the need for possible recesses while Senators leave for floor votes.
- Prepare an opening statement for the chair, ranking Member, and other Senators.

¹ For details on the hearing process and procedures, see archived CRS Report RL30548, *Hearings in the U.S. Senate: A Guide for Preparation and Procedure*.

² For more detail on scheduling hearings, see CRS Report 98-337, *Senate Committee Hearings: Scheduling and Notification*, by (name redacted).

Witness Selection and Testimony³

- Select witnesses in conjunction with committee leaders, executive branch officials, and issue leaders. Senate Rule XXVI, paragraph 4(d), provides that, except for the Appropriations Committee, the minority is entitled to call its own witnesses on at least one day of the hearing.
- Invite witnesses informally, then by formal letter from the chair, providing hearing information and requesting pertinent information. Invitation letters may include date, time, location, subject, a copy of pertinent Senate and committee rules, reimbursement information (if applicable), deadline for submitting written statements specifying the required format and the number of copies required, and the name and phone number of a staff contact.
- Where appropriate, interview, depose, or subpoena witnesses.
- Obtain required number of copies of each witness's written statement and, if directed by the committee, write summaries of submitted testimony for distribution to committee Members prior to the meeting.

Media Concerns

- Provide committee press secretary with material for announcements of events and activities and information for the committee website.
- In conjunction with the press secretary, work with the Senate press galleries to coordinate media space and coverage. Information about the Senate's media galleries is at <http://www.senate.gov/galleries/>.
- In consultation with the press secretary, assemble media kits and arrange interviews or press conferences with the chair and other Senators.
- On the hearing day and in consultation with the committee press secretary, distribute press releases, witness statements, and the witness list.

Final Preparations

- Prepare briefing books for Senators that may include a description of the subject, scope, and purpose of the hearing; copies and comparisons of measures under consideration; pertinent statutes and regulations, court decisions, and articles; a chronology of major events; suggested questions or talking points; and a list of witnesses, biographical information, and copies or summaries of written testimony.

³ For more detail on witness selection and testimony, see CRS Report 98-304, *House Committee Hearings: Arranging Witnesses*, by (name redacted); CRS Report 98-392, *Senate Committee Hearings: Witness Testimony*, by (name redacted); and CRS Report RS22649, *Senate Committee Hearings: The "Minority Witness Rule"*, by (name redacted).

- Assemble materials on the dais, including a gavel and block (for the chair), briefing books, Senate and committee rules (for staff), cups and water, and paper and pencils.
- Place cups, water, and nameplates on the witness table.
- Provide the official reporter with the witness list, witness statements, and committee Members' opening statements.

Author Contact Information

(name redacted)
Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process
/redacted/@crs.loc.gov, 7-....

Acknowledgments

This report was originally written by Richard C. Sachs, former specialist in American National Government at CRS, and was later updated by (name redacted), former analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process at CRS. The author currently listed has updated this report and is available to answer questions on the subject.

EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted names, phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.